A MYSTERY COMEDY

IN

THREE ACTS

"TIGER HOUSE"

—By—

ROBERT ST. CLAIR

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"TIGER HOUSE"

A MYSTERY COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By

ROBERT ST. CLAIR

(Author of "The Sixth Key", "Hearts and Hats," "The Tower Room Mystery," "The Phantom Tiger," and many other stage successes.)

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The following is a copy of the program of the premiere presentation of "Tiger House" at English's Opera House, Indianapolis, Ind.

THE BERKELL PLAYERS

PRESENT

"TIGER HOUSE"

A Novel Mystery Comedy in Three Acts
By ROBERT ST. CLAIR
Produced under the
Personal Direction of Wm. V. Hull
The first time on any stage

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(As you meet them)

Erma Lowrie	MISS JEAN OLIVER
Yami, a Hindu	MR. FRANK MARLOW
Sarah Broderick	MISS MILDRED HASTINGS
Murdock, a Scotchman	MR. HERBERT DOBBINS
MacIntosh	MR. MILTON BYRON
Arthur Hale	MR. ROBERT ST. CLAIR
Oswald Kerins	MR. LARRY SULLIVAN
Peggy Van Ess	MISS ISABELLE ARNOLD
Thompson	MR. WM. V. HULL
"The Mystery Woman"	MISS BERNICE MARSOLAISE
The Tiger Man	? ? ? ? ?

SCENE: A lonely country estate; two miles from the nearest village.

TIME: Late September.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE:

A library in "Mystery Manor". Late afternoon.

ACT TWO:

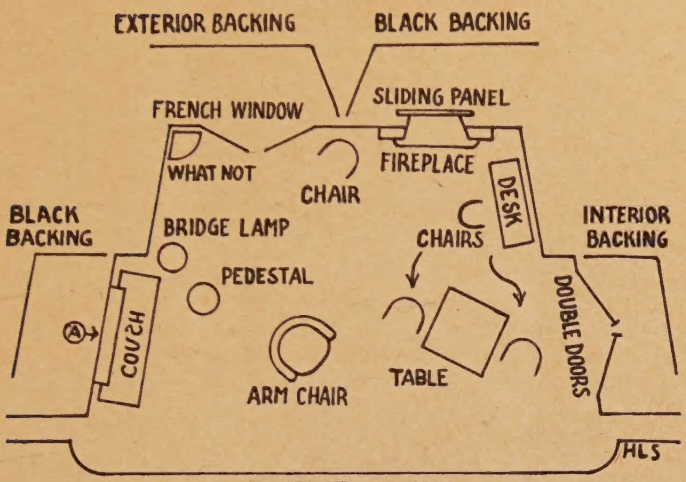
The same. Fifteen minutes later.

ACT THREE:

The Secret Room. The action of the last act begins approximately fifteen minutes before the second act climax in the secret room.

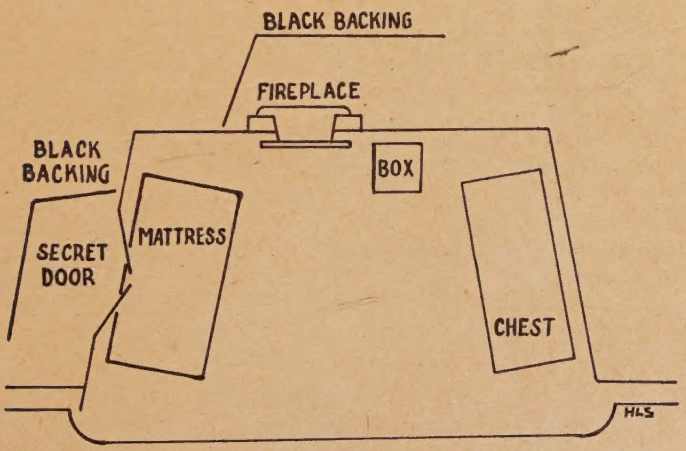
(Setting may be the same as previous acts.)

SCENE PLOT



ACT I & II

Ⓐ PRACTICAL BOOKCASE - 4FT. FROM FLOOR - HINGED TO SWING TOWARD STAGE



ACT III - "THE SECRET ROOM"

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

(Five men, five women)

ERMA LOWRIE

AUNT SOPHIA

THE MYSTERY WOMAN

PEGGY VAN ESS

YAMI

ARTHUR HALE

MACINTOSH

MRS. MURDOCK

THOMPSON

OSWALD KERINS

(The part of Mrs. Murdock may be taken by a man, if necessary.)

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

ERMA LOWRIE:

The typical heroine, with the exception that she has a mind and a will of her own and is fundamentally very courageous. Young, lovely, frank and appealing. It is only after many nerve-racking experiences that she finally gives way and allows her fear to be made manifest. Wears a lovely soft tea gown or semi-formal dinner dress throughout the play.

AUNT SOPHIA:

A genial, good-natured and generally cheerful woman who, in spite of her protestations of scornful disbelief in anything supernatural, is really very superstitious. She should be played with intense seriousness although it is a comedy part. About fifty years of age, with grey hair, parted primly in the middle and drawn back into a knot at the nape of her neck. She wears glasses because she is a bit nearsighted. Her clothes in the first part of the play consist of a dark, slightly old-fashioned, silk dress, black shoes and stockings. She changes this dress later on for a brightly flowered silk kimono and does her hair up in curl-papers.

MRS. MURDOCK:

A superstitious, taciturn and grim Scotch woman. Stiff and a bit stilted in all her movements and mysterious-appearing at all times. There appears to be a hidden motive in everything she says and does. She speaks slowly and intensely. Has grey hair, a nondescript, dark housedress covered with a long grey or white apron, and carries a huge bunch of jangling keys suspended from her belt by a long, thin chain.

PEGGY VAN NESS:

Peggy is a modern girl . . . quite pretty, very talkative and a bit dumb. Boy-conscious, too. When she speaks she rattles on at a mile-a-minute pace, scarcely pausing for

breath. She is quite assured of herself and even when frightened away she does it with a practical, matter-of-fact manner that permits no argument. Wears a smart, flashy fall suit and hat to match and . . . chews gum incessantly!

THE MYSTERY WOMAN:

She is everything the sobriquet implies. Tall, dark, slender . . . a bit "Russian" looking, with large, frightened eyes and a fearful, frantic manner. On her first entrance she speaks "with her tongue in her cheek" in order to give the impression of having been gagged. She wears a dark, torn dress and coat . . . both quite wet and muddy . . . no hat. On her first entrance she has a bandana handkerchief bound about the lower part of her face and her hands are tied behind her back.

YAMI:

He is a Hindu. Swarthy of skin but not too dark. Stiff, formal and a bit automatic. Speaks slowly, with a slight accent. One who continually wears a mask and keeps his emotions closely guarded. His presence constantly dominates the play . . . even when he is not on the stage as his very appearance is a bit sinister. Wears a dark suit, preferably black or dark blue. Stiff, white collar and black four-in-hand tie. Wears a snowy white turban and tiny, gold earrings.

OSWALD KERINS:

He is a young man of unprepossessing appearance. He lives in a world of his own . . . among his specimens . . . and is intensely enthusiastic over his work, but quite cowardly and "jumpy" when once brought to the realization of his surroundings. He should be a blond young man, with a shock of unruly hair which is never combed. Quite thin,

a bit stoop-shouldered and wears enormous glasses. His clothes are in good style but are unpressed, muddy and dirty.

THOMPSON:

Another sinister character, but unlike Yami, he is rough, uncultured, sharp and brusque. Speaks with a blunt frankness and in a loud tone of voice . . . except in the last act when he becomes suddenly very servile in a certain scene. He is bearded . . . not heavy . . . just unshaven. Wears a "slicker" coat, rain boots and where convenient a regular "Sou'wester".

ARTHUR HALE:

A good-looking, well set up young man with a pleasing personality, but one who has incurred a vast amount of self-pity because of his physical handicap, which is a slight limp which he uses throughout the play. Arthur should be able to secure a certain amount of pity from the audience because he is apparently devoted to Erma and one wonders why she cannot return his affection. Wears a neat fall suit, topcoat and hat which he changes for a silk dressing gown in Act Two.

MacINTOSH:

A rugged, husky, handsome young fellow. One of those "down-to-earth" types who scoffs at the supernatural and looks beneath the surface for a logical motive for the strange happenings in the house. When he isn't speaking he fades into the background, so that one is scarcely conscious of his presence. Wears old, nondescript clothes throughout the play.

"TIGER HOUSE"

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The scene is a library in "Mystery Manor", so-called because of the alleged hauntings. The room is large and spacious, but there is an atmosphere of gloom and depression . . . almost of suspense. At no time during the play are the lights full up. Even when the electrical fixtures are all turned on, the depths and corners of the room are still in shadow. There is a large fireplace, upstage at Left Center, which is so massive that it gives a medieval effect. The color of the walls is a bluish green . . . with heavy velour curtains to match. All the furniture, while costly and in good taste, should suggest age and long usage. There are a couple of large-paned French windows upstage Right Center. An arch with double doors is well down Left. These doors are the only entrances to the room, not including the secret way through the fireplace. A davenport is flat against the wall Right with a practical bookcase directly above it. The bookcase is on hinges and swings out toward the stage. An arch-chair stands Center and a table and two chairs Left Center. A small escritoire with chair to match stands above arch and to Left of fireplace.*

A large picture of AUNT SYLVIA *is hanging on the rear wall above the fireplace. The eyes and lamp in the picture must be covered with gelatin to produce the light effect during the play.*

AT THE RISE OF THE CURTAIN: *The room is quite dark, the only lights coming from the fireplace and the lighted bridge lamp back of the davenport. The weak rays of this lamp fall directly on the crystal globe which rests on a small pedestal to the Left of it.*

The last rays of an autumn sun light up the dreary landscape back of the windows and show in startling silhouette the form of YAMI, *who is bending over the crystal, peering into its depths in absorbed contemplation. A slight glow seems to come from the crystal itself, giving it a weird and uncanny effect, almost of hypnosis.*

Sitting on the upper edge of the davenport is ERMA, *a determined young woman . . . hands in lap . . . entranced.*

ERMA *(After a slight pause.)* Well? . . .

YAMI *(Frowns . . . concentrating.)* It blurs, Mem Sahib.

ERMA. Oh, don't tell me that you can't see any more. And . . . at the most interesting part.

YAMI. I tell only what comes into the crystal depths. But I will try . . . *(Bends closer to crystal . . . pauses.)* Ah! It clears . . .

ERMA. Yes!

YAMI. I see a form . . . the color yellow . . . with stripes of black . . . fur . . . *(Pauses—then suddenly.)* It's a *Cat!*

ERMA *(Perplexed.)* A cat?

YAMA. A big cat . . . surrounded by waving green fronds . . . *(Pause.)* . . . a jungle cat!

ERMA *(Pondering.)* Black stripes . . . fur . . . *(Looks up.)* Do you mean a tiger . . . or . . . ?

YAMI. Yes . . . yes! A tiger . . . stalking prey!

ERMA *(Shivers.)* Oh, I don't like *that!* What else do you see, Yami?

YAMI. It is not clear . . . I don't understand why it blurs . . . *(Pauses, concentrates on the crystal—suddenly.)* Ah!

ERMA *(Bends closer.)* Yes . . . What is it?

YAMI. Stealthily he creeps along . . . stops before the windows of a large house . . . crouches . . . *springs!* I hear breaking glass . . . *(He is breathing heavily, pauses.)* Again it blurs . . . It's gone! *(He straightens up—hand drawn across his eyes denotes that the seance is finished. Steps back a couple of paces.)* That is all, Mem Sahib.

ERMA *(Sighs . . . relaxes . . . and leans back.)* That was quite thrilling, Yami. I wish you hadn't finished so abruptly.

YAMI. The Tiger is Man's enemy.

ERMA. I wonder what significance this crystal reading has . . . for *me! (Musing . . .trying to decipher the meaning.)* A Tiger! *(Laughs.)* I know. It's symbolical. The Tiger symbolizes Man forever stalking his prey—Woman! *(Laughs again, showing that she has not taken the crystal gazing seriously.)*

YAMI. Do not laugh, Mem Sahib. It means something. The crystal never lies. *(During this scene the light back of the windows has changed to blue and now slowly darkens completely out. Enter* AUNT SOPHIA *through arch Left. She is a middle-aged spinster of an excitable disposition. She is plainly dressed in good taste . . . but a trifle old-fashioned.)*

SOPHIA. Erma, that old Mrs. Murdock said that . . . Why are you sitting here in the dark? *(Switches on the desk lamp on the escritoire up Left and come downstage, stops short at sight of* YAMI *and sniffs contemptuously.)* Oh! What is he doing here?

ERMA. Yami has been telling my fortune, Auntie.

SOPHIA. Just heathen tricks! You know very well that all that stuff is just a fake.

YAMI *(Takes step forward.)* Mem Sahib Yami is no fake!

ERMA *(Arises and turns to* SOPHIA.*)* You shouldn't criticize him when you don't know what he's told me. *(To* YAMI.*)* Thank you for the reading, Yami. I enjoyed it immensely.

YAMI. Yes, Mem Sahib. *(Salaams to* ERMA, *pushes light button on wall Right. . . . Chandelier and brackets light up. But, instead of dispelling the gloom they only help to enhance it.* YAMI *crosses Left, is about to cross the threshold when he suddenly turns, gazing penetratingly at* SOPHIA, *and exits.)*

SOPHIA. Why! *(Crosses to Center indignantly.)* Did you see the way that man looked at me? I know he has disliked me ever since we moved into this house.

ERMA. You haven't been very pleasant and courteous to *him*, you know.

SOPHIA. He looks villainous. It wouldn't surprise *me* if he took a sudden notion to poison us *all*. He has plently of chances, and all Hindus are supposed to be treacherous.

ERMA *(Sits on davenport, toying with a magazine which has been laying beside her.)* What reason could Yami have for harming us?

SOPHIA *(Sits in Center arm-chair.)* The mere fact that we are Christians . . .

ERMA. Why, *he* is a Christian, Auntie.

SOPHIA. So *he* says. But he still practices his crystal gazing and superstitious nonsense. I don't call that very Christian-like.

ERMA. Well, at least, he isn't afraid to stay here. Mrs. Murdock and Yami are the only ones we can get near the house after dark.

SOPHIA *(Earnestly speaking.)* That's the point I am getting at, Erma, dear. I am afraid here and I'm not ashamed to admit it. When all the people of the countryside stay away from this place, there must be some foundation for their fears.

ERMA. Nonsense! They're superstitious. Because Aunt Sylvia was a spirit medium they think the house is bewitched.

SOPHIA. Well, I think your Aunt Sylvia must have been out of her mind to leave such a will.

ERMA *(Smiling.)* Why out of her mind, Auntie? Because she made me the sole heiress?

SOPHIA. Now, Erma, you know what I mean. Goodness knows, I didn't want any of her possessions.

ERMA. I was only teasing. But I think it was just wonderful of her to leave me this beautiful old house. And I would be quite happy here if I only knew she had died peacefully, instead of in such a tragic manner.

SOPHIA. What a terrible death she had! *(Shudders.)*

ERMA. Please dear, don't talk about it!

SOPHIA. But it was so strange and mysterious. If it had happened in Africa or India, one wouldn't wonder

about it. But here—in civilized country—it was uncanny!

ERMA. It *was* strange.

SOPHIA *(Nervously.)* Oh, I shudder whenever I think of it. They said that she was mangled, as though some lion or tiger had attacked her.

ERMA *(Rises . . . startled.) Tiger!*

SOPHIA *(Looks at her in surprise.)* Why, Erma, what is it?

ERMA *(Recovers herself . . . and sits again . . . nervously toying with magazine . . . letting the pages ruffle through her fingers.)* Oh, nothing, dear. I wonder who or what it really was that killed her?

SOPHIA. I don't like to think of it. She's been gone a year now, and the shock of her sudden death has worn off. But . . . *(Leans closer . . . confidentially . . . turns chair a little Right.)* I have my theories!

ERMA *(A trifle amused.)* Yes? What are they?

SOPHIA *(Speaks almost in a whisper . . . mysteriously.)* It was an elemental!

ERMA. A what?

SOPHIA *(Rises and crosses to Right of Center.)* An elemental is an evil being, a sort of disembodied spirit—of neither man nor beast. When materialized, it does all kinds of mischief.

ERMA *(Laughs.)* I thought you didn't *believe* in the supernatural, Auntie.

SOPHIA. I don't, but I've read a lot. And I'm a God-fearing woman myself. It was when your Aunt Sylvia became a spirit medium that we stopped speaking to each other. She tried to make me believe in her nonsense. But, while I don't believe that there are ghosts, I do say there was something mysterious about . . . *(Coughs . . . gulps . . . and fumbles at her mouth.)*

ERMA *(Rises and crosses to her.)* Now, what is it, Auntie?

SOPHIA. My upper plate . . . is too large. *(Gets it in place and sighs in relief.)* There!

ERMA. I'm sorry. You should see a dentist. *(She can't help but laugh a little.)* What were you saying when you started to cough?

SOPHIA *(Confidential again.)* I was trying to tell you how nervous this place makes me. *(*ERMA *returns to the davenport, sits, picks up a magazine which she looks through during the ensuing dialogue.)* I wish you'd sell the house and move away from here!

ERMA. You know I can't do that. Aunt Sylvia definitely specified that I must live here for two years in order to retain this part of her estate. Why, it's a beautiful old house, and even if I didn't *have* to live in it, in order to carry out the terms of the will, I should *want* to anyway.

SOPHIA. I'd forgotten about that clause in the will. Foolish idea! I tell you the house is haunted. The neighbors ought to know.

ERMA. Their opinions aren't very reliable, Auntie.

SOPHIA. Well, we've been here just three days now, and I was beginning to think everything was very normal about the house until—last night.

ERMA. Something happened?

SOPHIA *(Nods.)* I could have sworn that I heard something . . . peculiar sounds . . . in the hall. And once after midnight I was positive that something padded up and down outside of my door.

ERMA. What do you mean . . . padded?

SOPHIA. Just like a big dog. It wasn't my imagination. I *heard* something unusual . . . I know. Of course, I don't believe in ghosts.

ERMA *(Rises.)* It *was* your imagination. *(Crosses to table Left Center and lays magazine on it. Looks over other books.)* Well, after working in a stuffy department store for twenty-five dollars a week, this is like paradise itself. Shall I give up all this luxury because of silly superstitions? I should say not! *(Crossing to Center.)* I'm a healthy, modern girl. And I don't believe in spirits! Just because the former owner of this house was a spirit medium and died a violent death, I'm not going to voluntarily throw away a life of comfort. *(At Left Center.)*

SOPHIA *(Follows after her and puts arm about her.)* I'm sorry, dear, for what I said, and I don't blame you one bit for feeling as you do. I am not ungrateful, either. And

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because my only home is with you, I'll promise to stick—even if there are a million ghosts.

ERMA *(Pats her hand and smiles.)* Thank you, Auntie. We'll brighten up the old place and . . . *(*SOPHIA *coughs . . . gulps . . . gets teeth in place again.)* What! Again?

SOPHIA *(Annoyed.)* Isn't that embarrassing?

MRS. MURDOCK *(A canny old Scotch woman, with a broad accent, enters Left.)* A young lad to see ye, Miss. He says he has an appointment.

ERMA. He's probably the boat-man. The Agency promised to send him out tonight. *(To* MRS. MURDOCK.*)* Send him in here, please.

MRS. MURDOCK. Aye, lass. *(Starts to leave, but hesitates at door . . . turns.)* Lass, I wonder if . . .

ERMA. Yes?

MRS. MURDOCK *(Advances a step.)* Ye are goin' stay on here—in this house?

ERMA *(Rather surprised.)* Why, of course.

MRS. MURDOCK *(Shakes head.)* Poor lass—poor lass! *(Exits Left, shutting doors.)*

SOPHIA *(Going to Right Center.)* They *all* think you're crazy, Erma.

ERMA. She's superstitious, but means well.

SOPHIA. She *knows* something! *(Sits in armchair, picks up a magazine and begins to read.)* She was in this house when Sylvia was murdered. *(Nods toward the painting above the fireplace.)*

ERMA *(Crosses to rear of table, fumbles through magazines again.)* I hope he *is* the boat-man. I'd like to take the boat out tomorrow if the sun is shining.

MRS. MURDOCK *(Enters Left showing on* MACINTOSH, *nods to* ERMA.*)* There she is, sir. *(Goes out Left, closing doors.* MACINTOSH, *a husky young man, advances to Left of table Left. Waits for* ERMA *to speak. She has had her back towards him on his entrance. He coughs and she turns slowly.)*

ERMA. Well . . . ?

MAC. Miss Lowrie?

ERMA. Yes. I've been waiting for . . . *(Now turns, look-*

ing him straight in the face. Gasps as she recognizes him.) Oh! *Mac!*

SOPHIA. Erma! What is it?

ERMA *(Recovering herself quickly. He puts fingers to lips and shakes head "No".)* Oh, nothing, I'm just a little nervous, I guess. *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Your—your name, please?

MAC. MacIntosh, Ma'am.

ERMA. Are you the new boat-man?

MAC *(Nods—fumbling with hat—a little nervous.)* Yes, Miss. The Employment Agency sent me. They said you wanted me to come out tonight.

ERMA. Yes, of course. Do you have references?

MAC. Yes, Ma'am. *(Takes papers from inside pocket of coat, selects a couple and hands her. She crosses to bridge lamp Right to get a better look at them.)* I think they're all there.

SOPHIA *(Rises and crosses to Center.)* I trust that your knowledge of a boat and its equipment is sufficient for all emergencies, young man?

MAC. Well, I've never been fired from a job yet, Ma'am. *(Turns back to* ERMA.*)* Are the papers all right, Miss Lowrie? It's getting late and it's a long walk back to the village. Besides it looks like rain. *(Laughs, shortly.)* I'd like to know whether I'm hired or not.

ERMA *(Returns the papers, nervously.)* Er—yes. Yes, you may stay. *(To the staring* SOPHIA.*)* Auntie, call Mrs. Murdock, will you?

SOPHIA. Yes, dear. *(Goes to the door, then turns, looking at* MACINTOSH.*)* But I wouldn't take him on without first giving him a thorough tryout, if I were you. I'm frightened to death of the water.

MAC *(Deciding to tease the old lady.)* Well, then, I wouldn't advise you to ever go out with me in a motor boat, Ma'am. *(*ERMA *comes down Right Center.)*

SOPHIA. Why? Is it particularly dangerous?

MAC *(Soberly.)* Well, no. Unless you have an explosion, or get wrecked, or run aground—it's perfectly safe.

SOPHIA. Heavens! *(Coughs—gulps—hand to mouth—*

and exits quickly Left. MACINTOSH *laughs.* ERMA *steps closer to him, excitedly.)*

ERMA. Mac! When I looked around and saw you standing there . . . !

MAC. It handed you a jolt, didn't it? I wish you could have seen your face! *(Turns serious.)* As soon as I got your wire, I threw some things into a bag and—here I am.

ERMA. But why the disguise?

MAC. Am I disguised?

ERMA *(Smiles.)* I mean, why come masquerading as a servant?

MAC. I thought it would be much better that way. Don't you think I know how to handle your boats?

ERMA *(Smiles.)* Boat. There's only one. *(Shrugs.)* But there's enough mystery around here now without your adding to it. *(The door down Left opens. She quickly puts her fingers to her lips.)* Shh! Someone's coming. *(She walks away from him—going down Right while* MACINTOSH *puts the papers in his pocket as* MURDOCK *enters Left with an armful of wood, which she carries up to the fireplace and dumps beside the hearth.)* Oh, Mrs. Murdock, please get the small room on the North Side ready for Mr. MacIntosh, our—*(Looks quickly at* MACINTOSH, *who grins, then away again.)* . . . our new—er—boatman.

MRS. MURDOCK. Yes, lass. *(Starts Left,* MACINTOSH *starts to follow her . . . He gets almost to the door when* ERMA *stops him . . .* MRS. MURDOCK *pauses also.)*

ERMA. Oh, just a moment! Do you believe in spirits?

MAC. Only out of a bottle, Miss.

ERMA *(Laughs.)* You'll do! But, in all fairness to you, I must tell you that this house is supposed to be haunted.

MAC. Yes, Ma'am, I know. They told me about it in the village. They said that the beast that killed your Aunt Sylvia is supposed to roam these halls. They mentioned particularly the mysterious red lamp that always appears before a death.

ERMA. That is all. Dinner at seven. *(Blackout back of windows.)*

MAC. Yes, Ma'am. *(*MRS. MURDOCK *exits Left . . . .* SOPHIA *enters . . .* MACINTOSH *coughs, gulps, etc., as he passes her and exits Left.)*

SOPHIA *(Gasps—stands Left of table, gazing after him. Turns to* ERMA.*)* Why, was that man making fun of me?

ERMA *(Trying to keep from laughing.)* I don't believe so, Auntie.

SOPHIA *(Crosses Right. She has some crocheting which she now starts to work on.)* Well, he'd better not or out he'll go. I won't tolerate impudent servants. When does Arthur arrive? *(Sits on davenport Right.)*

ERMA. He should be here now. It's after six o'clock.

SOPHIA. Did you hear from Oswald?

ERMA. Yes. *(Sits in armchair.)* I had a wire from him this afternoon. He'll be on the same train with Arthur, if he remembers that he has been invited to visit us.

SOPHIA. I suppose he'll bring his collection of bugs with him?

ERMA. Of course. Oswald ought to fall in love with this place.

SOPHIA. Why? I haven't.

ERMA. I've noticed some gorgeous insects in the woods by the lake. And collecting them is his hobby, you know. *(The light back of the windows has gone down gradually until it is now pitch black.* ERMA *looks at the painting above the fireplace, shivers a little, goes to window and looks out. There is a flash of lightning and a roll of thunder, faint and faraway.)* I wouldn't be surprised if we had a storm tonight.

SOPHIA *(Looking up.)* I think that's only heat lightning.

ERMA. It *is* warm. *(Comes Right, stands in front of crystal . . . looking into it.)* Isn't it beautiful?

SOPHIA. What—the lightning?

ERMA. No, the crystal. How that globe of glass glitters! There is a glow 'way down in its heart, like—like the nucleus of light itself.

SOPHIA. Oh, you read that some place.

ERMA *(Pushes the crystal stand to Right wall.)* I have the queerest feeling tonight, Auntie. And yet, who would want to harm us? We're just two women who . . .

SOPHIA. Now, dear, I'm afraid that you've let me worry you with all my foolish prattle and nervousness. Why, I . . . *(There is a crash of thunder and the lights go out.)* Oh! *(*SOPHIA *screams.)*

ERMA. I told you that a storm was brewing.

SOPHIA. But why have the lights gone out?

ERMA. Trouble at the power house, I suppose. That's one disadvantage about small towns.

SOPHIA. Of course, that's it. Mrs. Morgan was telling me the other day that during a storm they go on and off like a . . . *(The eyes in the painting light up a bright green.)* O-h-h-h-h!

ERMA. What is it, Auntie?

SOPHIA *(Screams hysterically.)* Eyes!! *Eyes!!* *(Light in eyes of painting goes out . . . lights come up.* SOPHIA *is swaying back and forth on davenport with hand over mouth—gulping and coughing.)*

ERMA *(Crosses to* SOPHIA *and sits on the davenport.)* Take it easy, dear. There are the lights. *(*SOPHIA *gets her teeth in place.)* Now, what is the matter?

SOPHIA *(Points excitedly.)* That painting . . . the eyes . . . showed up in the dark. . . . They looked human!

ERMA *(Looks up at painting . . . comforts* SOPHIA.*)* Now, now, dear. The lights going out like that, and the reputation of the house, have got on your nerves. Arthur and Oswald will be here soon, and after a good chat with them and a big dinner, you won't feel so nervous.

SOPHIA. It *may* have been the reflection of the *lightning.*

ERMA. Of course, that's just what it was. Better get ready for dinner now, don't you think? *(Looks nervously at painting, impressed in spite of herself.)*

SOPHIA. Yes—yes, certainly. *(Starts to door Left, stops Left Center.)* And Erma—

ERMA. Yes, dear?

SOPHIA. It might be advisable to lock all the doors and windows tonight. Just as a precaution, you know. We are two miles from town, and it's a half mile across the lake to our nearest neighbor.

ERMA. All right, we'll lock them after the boys arrive.

SOPHIA. I, for one, will feel much safer then. *(Looks at painting, apprehensively.)* That's a good likeness of Sylvia. It looks real. *(Exits Left, shutting doors behind her.)*

ERMA *(Goes up and stands in front of picture.)* Yes—horribly real. What a dominating personality you must have had, Aunt Sylvia! *(*MRS. MURDOCK *enters Left, stands by doors.)* But why did you leave all your earthly possessions to me? You scarcely knew me.

MRS. MURDOCK. That was the very reason, lass.

ERMA *(Whirls, facing her.)* What? Oh, you startled me, Mrs. Murdock.

MRS. MURDOCK *(Comes Left Center.)* She left ye all her fortune, because of your pure, sweet soul—thinking that by doing so she could atone for some of the wrongs she had done others. *(*ERMA *is back down Center.* MRS. MURDOCK *continues earnestly.)* Ye'll pardon an old woman's childishness, but I wish ye were any other place but here tonight.

ERMA. Why, surely, *you* don't believe in ghosts, Mrs. Murdock?

MRS. MURDOCK. The house is bewitched, lass. *(Points to the painting.)* That woman sold her soul to Satan, and her tormented spirit roams the house these many days . . . looking . . . always looking . . .

ERMA. Instead of frightening me, all these silly superstitions only make me more determined to stay. And why shouldn't I stay? It's the only home I have now. *(Goes Right a little.* MRS. MURDOCK *follows her to Center.)*

MRS. MURDOCK. Oh, ye are in no danger from her, lass. Your pure, sweet soul is ample protection for ye. It is the Phantom Tiger that I fear.

ERMA. Tiger! There it is again. *(Sits on davenport.)* Now, I want you to tell me the origin of all these superstitions. Don't try to spare my feelings as all the others do when they learn that I've decided to remain here. What about this Phantom Tiger, Mrs. Murdock?

MRS. MURDOCK. I thought ye knew, lass. Well, it all started years ago . . . when . . . *she—(Nods toward picture.)* . . . was traveling through Africa . . . studying the Heathen Cult she practiced. One day she came across

a savage tribe who worshipped the beasts of the jungle. They had a man-eating tiger as their God.

ERMA. A tiger—in Africa?

MRS. MURDOCK. Yes, Miss. *(Sits in armchair.)* In some way she arranged to see the beast, and about its neck was a wonderful collar of jewels. To make the story short, lass, she stole that collar. Heaven alone knows how she got it, and managed to get it away safely, but she did. She came home and hid that accursed collar—no one knows where. Several times she saw *it* roaming about the house and declared that *it* had come after the necklace. Then, one morning, I found her lying in front of that fireplace, torn to bits. The police concluded that she had been murdered, and even suspected me. But finally they had to give up the case because there were no definite clues.

ERMA. And you believe that the Tiger is still here? *(Impressed in spite of herself.)*

MRS. MURDOCK *(Shakes head sorrowfully.)* I *know* that it's here, lass. I have seen the green eyes in the dark corners and I've heard the padded feet follow me stealthily down the hall.

ERMA. It sounds like a mystery story. And what about the jewels? Did you ever see them? *(She is leaning forward, thoroughly interested.)*

MRS. MURDOCK. I saw them only once when she first brought them home. It was a king's ransom, but evil . . . evil. Why she stole them I don't know. She had a fortune of her own. They have never been found.

ERMA. And knowing all this . . . and believing it, why do you still continue to live here?

MRS. MURDOCK. I have no fear, lass. I had naught to do with *it* or *its* jewels. I trust in God and feel safe.

ERMA *(Rises impatiently.)* It's just superstition . . . nothing but imagination. But I can see how easily one *would* find significance in the most trivial things with an adventure story like that for a background.

MRS. MURDOCK. There is more to tell, lass. The red lamp . . . *(Door bell rings off Left . . .* ERMA *starts.)*

ERMA. It's probably the boys. Please let them in, Mrs. Murdock.

MRS. MURDOCK. Aye, lass. It's a chilly night to be kept waiting on the porch. *(She exits Left, closing doors behind her.* ERMA *looks about, a little startled and nervous. Lightning back of window is more pronounced and a wind has come up which whistles eerily. She goes up to the picture again. This continual business with the painting is intended to give the impression that she has become fascinated with it. There is a pause as she stands contemplating the picture. A sudden long drawn-out scream is heard in the distance. She starts and whirls, facing the audience. There is a scratching at the window. She listens. The scratching is repeated. She crosses slowly to window, breathing heavily. She suddenly draws curtains together and stands holding them.)*

ARTHUR *(A young, good-looking man of twenty-five years enters Left. He walks with a cane and has a slight limp. He comes forward as he sees her, with hand outstretched.)* Hello, Cousin Erma. *(Comes Center. She crosses eagerly to him and they shake hands warmly.)*

ERMA. Why, Arthur! I'm so glad you could come.

ARTHUR. It was mighty kind of you to invite me out here for the week-end. The country air here should give me a new lease on life. It's just what I need. Gee, didn't that storm come up quickly?

ERMA. Yes, and from what I hear about these storms, they're liable to last for days. *(Helps him into chair Center. Chair is facing audience.)*

ARTHUR. A pleasant prospect!

ERMA. Yes, isn't it? Sit here. *(He does so and leans back with a sigh.)*

ARTHUR. Thanks, Erma. *(The lightning is now quite frequent and intermittent gusts of rain beat against the window.)*

ERMA. How is your leg getting on?

ARTHUR. Oh, as well as could be expected, I guess.

ERMA. You're too reckless, Art. *(ERMA at Right of chair.)*

ARTHUR. It wasn't my fault. That truck smashed into me. I couldn't get out of its way. Just my luck, though.

ERMA. It's an ill wind wind that blows no good. *Your* luck came when you collected your damage money.

ARTHUR. Speaking of luck, congratulations about yours in getting Aunt Sylvia's estate.

ERMA. Perhaps that's luck and . . . *(Glances towards windows.)* . . . perhaps it isn't.

ARTHUR. What do you mean?

ERMA. Oh, nothing. Have you seen Aunt Sophia?

ARTHUR. Not yet.

ERMA. She'll be down soon. Hungry?

ARTHUR. Famished.

ERMA. I'll have Yami hurry dinner. Excuse me. *(Starts to Left, gets Left Center. He stops her.)*

ARTHUR. Erma, wait . . . *(She stops, rises, becomes confused.)* I—I realize things are different between us since you inherited Aunt Sylvia's money and I know I shouldn't speak about this now. But you know how much I love you and I thought that—perhaps—some day—soon.

ERMA *(Comes to his side, puts hand on his shoulder.)* Arthur, dear, please don't. The money wouldn't make any difference if I really loved you . . . *(He looks up.)* Oh, I *do* care for you—a lot. But shouldn't we wait a while?

ARTHUR *(Sighs disconsolately, sits again.)* I've been proprosing to you for a whole year. Ever since I first found out that I had such a pretty cousin. That's one thing I'm grateful to Aunt Sylvia about. She introduced us.

ERMA. I'm dreadfully sorry that I can't feel differently, Art.

ARTHUR *(Rather petulantly.)* I don't want sympathy. I know I'm practically a cripple.

ERMA *(Changing the sbject quickly.)* But where is Oswald? I thought he was coming with you.

ARTHUR. He did. He's around somewhere. He's probably busy getting all his paraphernalia out of the taxi.

ERMA. Taxi? I didn't know there was one in town.

ARTHUR. Oh, yes. One of those "meets all the trains" affairs, you know. He was anxious enough to take us to the hotel, but when he learned our *real* destination, he wanted to back out. We managed to persuade him to give us a lift as far as the gate. But he absolutely refused to drive us all the way up to the house. Luckily I had an umbrella, but I feel sorry for Oswald—with all his bundles and grips. He'll be soaked. Your house surely has an enviable reputation, Erma.

ERMA. Why, the poor boy! I'll have Mrs. Murdock . . . *(Starts Left, meets* OSWALD *at door. He is a young, rather effeminate boy of not more than twenty-six, studious-looking and with rather an excitable way of talking and running his words together. He is soaked through and still wears his hat, the brim of which is hanging down with the water running off. He has on a fall coat, however, which has kept his suit fairly dry. He is loaded down with grips, specimen cases and bundles.)*

OSWALD. Ah, here you are, Cousin Erma. Charming place you have here. I'm all wet. *(Drops his things upstage Left and advances downstage a little.)*

ERMA *(Goes to him and shakes hands.)* Oswald! I'm so glad to see you.

OSWALD *(Removing his hat and coat.)* I'm glad to be here. But the next time I come, I'll bring a boat.

ERMA *(Starts Left.)* I'll try to find you something dry.

OSWALD. Don't bother. My suit is dry. *(Crosses Left Center.)*

ERMA. But how are your feet?

OSWALD. Not so bad. What does a little water matter anyway when one is as elated as I am? I shall be famous. I've discovered a new diurnal lepidopterous insect that abounds only in the South African interior and—

ARTHUR. He's off! *(Groans.)*

OSWALD *(Loftily.)* I beg your pardon?

ARTHUR. It's about time. You nearly had me gnawing my finger-nails on the train with your infernal scientific chatter.

ERMA. Well, you'll be in your glory here, Oswald. I can show you any number of rare specimens.

OSWALD. Oh, lovely . . . lovely! I can hardly wait for morning to explore.

ARTHUR. Did you ever have your head explored?

OSWALD *(Gives him a withering glance.)* The caustic remarks of the ignorant should be ignored.

SOPHIA *(Enters Left. Comes Left Center.)* I heard your voices. Glad you arrived safely, Oswald. *(Stretches out her hand.)*

OSWALD. That's very nice of you. I must kiss you. *(Kisses her cheek.* ARTHUR *laughs.)*

SOPHIA. Goodness! *(Is rather flustered, but gathers herself together quickly and goes to* ARTHUR.*)* Welcome to "Mystery Manor," Arthur.

ARTHUR *(Takes her hand.)* How are you, Aunt Sophia? Excuse me for not getting up.

SOPHIA. I'm as well as could be expected . . . under the circumstances. *(Crosses to davenport and sits.)*

ARTHUR. What circumstances?

ERMA. Oh, Auntie believes all the ghost stories they tell about this house. *(Comes Center a few steps.)*

OSWALD. Ghosts? How interesting!

ARTHUR. Oh, you mean about the jewels, the red lamp, and so forth?

ERMA *(Rather surprised that he should know.)* Why, yes. How did *you* know?

ARTHUR *(Evasively.)* Who doesn't? The place is famous.

ERMA. How did you learn about the *jewels?*

ARTHUR. Why—why, Aunt Sylvia told me about them the last time I saw her alive.

ERMA. That's strange. *I* never knew about them until tonight.

SOPHIA. What jewels? What do you mean?

ERMA. There is a silly idea that Aunt Sylvia hid a necklace of tremendous value some place about the house.

OSWALD. How thrilling! *(Sits Left of table Left.)*

SOPHIA. Well, of all things! It wouldn't surprise me. It's just like her.

PEG VAN ESS *(Enters Left. Sands glaring at the boys.)* Say, what do you two fellows mean by leaving a lady outside to do a battle scene with the angry elements while you do the rush act into the house? Afraid of getting wet?

ERMA. Why, Peg! Peg Van Ess! *(Crosses to her, they embrace.)*

PEG. Sure, Erma, it's me, in person. Not a moving picture.

ERMA. I'm so glad to see you, Peg.

PEG *(This speech increases in rate until the climax is reached.)* Yes, I figured that you would be. So when the floorwalker of our Department fired me for being late after an evening party with a few of the boy friends, I says to myself, "Where to now, Bright-eyes?" And like a bolt from the blue came the answer. "Peg," says I to myself, "Now that the little girl chum has left the merry old ribbon counter to take up the arduous task of crashing the society gate, go to see her for the week-end. She'll be fed up on the old back-to-nature stuff by this time, and will appreciate a few laughs. And you're just the prize baby to hand them to her." *So*—I hopped the train and here I am!

ERMA. I'm glad you remembered me, Peg. How did you meet my cousins?

OSWALD. She overheard Art and me mention our destination. From then on she attached herself to us with the firm hold of a sticking plaster.

PEG. Be a nice birdie and chirp to yourself!

ARTHUR. I forgot to tell you about her, Erma. Yes, we did meet her on the train.

PEG. Yeah, we got real chummy on the way out. But when we stopped at the gate these two shieks ditched little Peggy and left her to run the gamut of rain drops to the house all by her lonesosme.

ARTHUR. I'm sorry. I was anxious to get into the house. Wet weather affects my leg.

OSWALD. And I couldn't be bothered with her. I had

more than I could take care of with all my specimen cases and grips.

ERMA. Take off your things, Peg, and meet my Aunt Sophia.

PEG. So this is the maiden aunt, eh? I've heard about her! *(Removes her hat and coat . . . throws them on back of chair by table.)* How's tricks, Auntie?

SOPHIA *(Gasps.)* Tricks!

PEG. Great Statute of Liberty, what a night! *(Sits Right of table.)* Darn nice house, Erma.

ERMA. We like it. How long are you going to stay, Peg?

PEG. Over Sunday. I must get back to the boy friend, you know. A new one, Erm. And a perfect dear! *(Door bell off Left.)*

SOPHIA. I wonder who that is?

ERMA. Whoever it is, his business must be important to come out here on a night like this.

OSWALD. I must arise early tomorrow morning. I expect to catch a great many specimens in these woods.

ARTHUR. If popular superstition means anything, you ought to get a lot of specimens right here in the house, Oswald.

OSWALD. I want *live* ones. *(Giggles at his own pun.)* You can't frighten me. *(Rises and goes up Left.)*

PEG. *Live* ones? What's the matter with us? We're not *dead!*

MRS. MURDOCK *(Enters Left.)* A man to see ye, lass. He says he has an appointment.

ERMA. Ask him to come in here, please, Mrs. Murdock.

MRS. MURDOCK. He's a rough looking character, Miss. *(Exits Left.)*

SOPHIA. I'd be careful about whom I let in this house after dark, Erma.

ERMA. I haven't the heart to let even a tramp stay out in the rain, Auntie.

THOMPSON *(A rough-bearded man enters Left. Comes Center, giving them all a searching glance. He wears a slicker . . . carries a flash lantern. Speaks direct to* AUNT SOPHIA, *crossing Right Center.)* Are you Miss Lowrie?

SOPHIA *(Rises, shrinks back . . . answers timidly.)* N-n-no. She is Miss Lowrie. *(Points to* ERMA.*)*

THOMPSON. 'Scuse me. *(Turns to* ERMA. SOPHIA *rises and backs up stage a little.)* My name's Thompson, Miss. *(Speaks gruffly.)*

ERMA. What can I do for you, Mr. Thompson?

THOMPSON. Are all your windows and doors locked up tight, Miss?

ERMA *(Rather taken aback.)* Why, I guess so. Why?

THOMPSON. Well, you better make sure because there's a man-eating tiger prowling around here some place. *(Makes this very impressive.)*

OSWALD. My goodness! *(Crosses down to Left of table.)*

SOPHIA. O-h-h-h!!! *(Screams . . . gulps . . . coughs, hand to mouth . . . sits quickly on the davenport again . . . gets teeth in place and fans herself violently with a handkerchief.)*

ERMA. Why, you must be mistaken.

ARTHUR. A *Tiger!* Here?

THOMPSON. That's what I said.

OSWALD *(Sits Left of table, speaks half to himself and very positive.)* I shall *not* explore.

ARTHUR. Where did he come from?

THOMPSON. He got out of his cage at Lazelle and Whitney's Winter quarters about three miles from here. One of the trainers left the cage door unlatched.

ERMA. Oh, the circus people?

THOMPSON. Yeah, I'm one of the keepers. He escaped about five this afternoon and was last seen down by the lake—the one on your estate.

OSWALD. I wish I had remained at home. It's apparently *much* safer there—*much safer!*

THOMPSON. We've got men out in all directions with instructions to shoot on sight. For, although he's a valuable animal, he's dangerous. He's been in captivity only a few months.

ARTHUR. They're all mean brutes.

THOMPSON. Mean? *(Plays this speech up for a melodramatic effect. The storm is now quite violent outside and*

the moaning of the wind is almost continuous. But the lightning is intermittent and works only on cues from now on.) Why, you ought to see this one when he's hungry. He used to hurl himself at the bars of his cage with the force of a battering ram. All I can say is, God pity the man, woman or child who cross his path tonight. He's dangerous enough at his best, but this storm will probably drive him crazy. I *saw* him kill a trainer once. A few weeks ago. It was awful. A man one minute—a mass of quivering flesh the next—torn to shreds. *(There is a crash of thunder and lightning plays about the windows. All are startled.)*

PEG. Page Frankenstein!

OSWALD *(Shudders.)* It's absolutely neauseating just to hear about it!

SOPHIA. Do—do you suppose he is hungry *now?*

THOMPSON. Not a doubt about it. That's why I wanted to warn you. *(Pauses and looks toward French windows.)* Them French window things ain't any too safe. A few panes of glass is all that stands between him—and *you! (*MACINTOSH *rushes in doors Left, slams them shut behind him and stands with his back against them, breathing heavily.* ERMA *and* SOPHIA *scream at his sudden entrance.)*

ARTHUR *(Rises quickly.)* My God, man, but you frightened us!

OSWALD *(Almost fainting.)* Oh, my heart!

ERMA. What's the matter?

MAC *(Nods to windows.)* Did you hear it? Out there—a scream for help—in a woman's voice—from the lake.

THOMPSON. The Tiger's got someone!

ERMA *(Pulling herself together and trying to speak calmly.)* Mr. MacIntosh, this man claims that one of the wild animals has escaped from a circus that has its winter quarters near here and is prowling around the countryside.

MAC. Then let's go and see where that cry came from. Perhaps someone is in terrible danger.

THOMPSON. Sure. Come on, I'll go with you. We must get him. *(Starts Left, stops by* MACINTOSH.*)* Have you got a revolver?

MAC. Yes, In my grip.

THOMPSON. Better get it. And stick close to me. *(They start Left.)*

ERMA *(Rather confused.)* I—I—Be careful, please. *(*ARTHUR *looks at her inquiringly.)*

MAC. Don't worry, Miss. I'll take care of myself. *(Exits Left with* THOMPSON. *Lightning and thunder.)*

OSWALD. Phew! *(Mops brow with handkerchief. Comes down Left.)* I'm frightened stiff!

PEG. If that tiger gets in here, you'll be dead stiff.

ARTHUR. Well, this *is* pleasant news! *(Sits in arm chair.)*

PEG. And they say the country is quiet and *restful!*

ERMA. I'm sorry, Peg.

PEG. Methinks little Peggy's visit will be cut short. It's too exciting for this little working girl.

ERMA. You'll feel better after a big dinner and a good sleep.

SOPHIA. How brave of that man! He would have gone right out there to face that thing with his bare hands if that—that trainer hadn't asked him about his revolver.

ARTHUR *(Rather sarcastically.)* Just mock heroics! *(*ERMA *moves toward French windows.)*

SOPHIA. Well, I'll admit I am so frightened my teeth are chattering.

ERMA *(In an attempt at gayety.)* Hold on to them, Auntie. They might jump out. *(Nervously goes up to window—touches curtain—it flies up with a bang.* ARTHUR *and* OSWALD *rise quickly.)*

SOPHIA *(Screams.)* Look out!

PEG. I've swallowed my gum!

ERMA *(Whirls, facing them.)* Don't yell like that, Auntie. I'm jumpy enough as it is. *(Comes back down Right Center.)* Tigers! Tigers! That's all I've heard tonight. Instead of "Mystery Manor," this house should be named "Tiger House." Yami saw a tiger in the crystal and . . .

ARTHUR *(Questioningly.)* Yami?

SOPHIA. A heathen Hindu. *(Absently takes up crocheting which she has left on the davenport earlier in the Act. Starts working on it.)*

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"TIGER HOUSE" ACT I—*See page 26*

ERMA. My house boy.

SOPHIA. He's mysterious. Humph! A fake crystal gazer. *(Snorts her contempt.)*

ERMA. I wonder, if by any chance, there could be any foundation for all these mysterious happenings?

SOPHIA. Certainly. *(Nods towards painting. Positively.)* *She's* responsible for it all.

OSWALD. I never did like haunted houses. *(Sits Left of table.)*

PEG. Say that again, little one. I second the motion.

OSWALD. It's cold in here.

ERMA. You should change your clothes, Oswald.

OSWALD. Oh, I'm all right. I'll leave my light burning all night, though.

ERMA *(Glancing towards window . . . lightning and thunder . . . though not too loud.)* I don't like the idea of Mr. MacIntosh going out there.

ARTHUR *(Sitting again.)* Who is this MacIntosh?

ERMA. The new boat-man.

ARTHUR. Gee, it must be great to be rich—with servants, and . . .

SOPHIA. He only came tonight.

ARTHUR. You don't know him then?

ERMA. No, but his references are excellent, and I like his appearance.

ARTHUR. References can be faked, you know.

ERMA *(Looks at him in surprise.)* Why, Art, I believe you distrust Mr. MacIntosh, and you've only just seen him. *(*YAMI *enters Left, silently but quickly. Stands a second looking at* OSWALD *with arms folded.* OSWALD *rises slowly and backs up stage, frightened at* YAMI'S *appearance.)*

OSWALD. My goodness! *(To* PEG.*)* Do you see the same thing I do?

YAMI *(Ignores* OSWALD . . . *speaks to* ERMA.*)* Dinner is ready now, Mem Sahib.

SOPHIA. Oh, I don't *want* any dinner.

ERMA. How about you boys?

ARTHUR. I'm too excited to eat . . . just now.

OSWALD. And I'm too frightened.

ERMA. Keep things warm, Yami. We won't be ready to eat for a while yet.

YAMI. Yes, Mem Sahib. *(Salaams and goes out Left, closing doors after him.)*

PEG. I'm so hungry my stomach thinks my throat's taken a permanent vacation from eating!

ERMA. You shall have all you can eat, Peg.

OSWALD *(Coming down Left, relieved now that* YAMI *has gone.)* What a rough looking character!

ARTHUR. Is that Yami? *(Nods after him.)*

ERMA. Yes.

ARTHUR. He's an odd-looking fellow. A Hindu, isn't he?

ERMA. Yes. He's rather eccentric, but a good man nevertheless. *(Crosses up to window on first of speech and now comes down on* ARTHUR'S *Right.)* Oh, Art, I'm so sorry all these things had to happen just at this time. I can see where you're going to have a fine rest!

OSWALD. So can I.

ARTHUR *(To* OSWALD.*)* Do you want to go back?

OSWALD. With that wild and ferocious animal running around loose? I should say not! *(Rises and crosses up to French windows.)*

ARTHUR *(Impatiently.)* Then keep quiet. *(To* ERMA.*)* Don't mind me, Erma. I'm not an invalid, you know. Anyway, why worry? I don't believe in ghosts and if there *is* an animal out there, he can't get in *here.*

SOPHIA. I'm not so sure about that.

OSWALD. As that man said, these windows *are* frail.

ARTHUR. As frail as *you* are?

OSWALD *(Comes down stage, indignant.)* Why—you . . .

ERMA. Now, boys! I see where I'll be kept busy keeping peace between you two.

PEG. I'll bet on the bug-chaser.

OSWALD. Oh, stop using that slang! *(Crosses to Left.)*

PEG. Say, Camel, pretend you're a desert well and dry up!

ARTHUR. They'll get him before long . . . the Tiger, I mean. *(Grins at* OSWALD, *rises, leaning on his cane.)*

But if you'll show me where my room is, I'll wash up and unpack a few things.

PEG *(Rises.)* Show me where I am to do the sleeping act, too, will you? I simply must wash the terra-firma off my lily white hands.

SOPHIA. I'll show you to your room. *(Rises, gathering up her work. Crosses Left to door, and turns back.)* Are you afraid to be left alone, Erma?

OSWALD. Alone? Why, the idea! *I'm* here, you know.

ARTHUR. Same thing, only worse.

OSWALD. Are you insinuating that I can't protect her?

ERMA *(Crosses to* OSWALD *and pats him on the back.)* You go with them, Oswald, and have Auntie show you to *your* room. Goodness knows you should have changed into some dry clothes long before this. I'll wait here for those men to come back.

OSWALD. Yes, I guess I should get into some other clothes.

ARTHUR *(Crosses to doors Left.)* Shall I see you at dinner then, Erma?

ERMA. Yes. *(She looks at a little wrist watch she is wearing.) Seven-thirty.* Try to make it at eight.

ARTHUR. O.K. Come on, folks. *(Exits Left.)*

PEG *(Crosses to door.)* You know, there's something I don't like in this funny house. *(Looks hard at* OSWALD *and exits Left.)*

OSWALD. She's looking right at me!

SOPHIA. I guess I'd better take a flashlight along. These lights are very unreliable. *(Exits Left after* ARTHUR.*)*

OSWALD *(Gathering up his coat, hat, grips, etc. Crossses to door.)* I must examine my specimens. I do hope they didn't get wet.

ERMA. You brought some along?

OSWALD. Dear me—yes. I couldn't be without them. The specimens in *this* case *(Holds up a specimen case.)* are all alive. *(Exits Left, leaving doors open, but they close slowly after him, as if from a draught of air.)*

ERMA *(Calls after him.)* Well, then, if the Tiger breaks in on you, you can turn some of them loose . . . *(*ERMA *hesitates after all have gone . . . There is a flash of lightning*

and thunder . . . after which there is a dead silence. The scratching again is heard at the window, but as the draw curtains are closed, nothing can be seen. As she becomes aware of the scratching, ERMA *gasps and backs away Left, looking at the window, fascinated.)* Who—Who's there? *(No answer, but the scratches are repeated. She pulls herself together and crosses slowly up to the window and in a sudden burst of courage draws the curtains back a little and peeps through. There is a plaintive "Meow". She relaxes and laughs.)* Why, hello there, baby! *(The "Meow" is repeated and she unfastens the windows. She leans down and picks up a small black house cat which is quite wet and is meowing mournfully. She comes down into room Center, forgetting to close windows.)* You didn't want to get wet, did you, kitten? It's not very comfortable out there, is it? *(There is a crash of thunder but no lightning. Windows fly open and the* MYSTERY WOMAN *falls into the room but is not seen by the audience. Only the crash of her fall is heard, for there is a complete blackout the moment the thunder is heard.* ERMA *screams and drops cat out of doors Left. The wind howls about the house and the swish of the wind-driven rain is heard.)* Good gracious! Those lights again! *(Lights come up again and* ERMA *sees* THE WOMAN *on the floor. She shrinks back, but only for a second, then gathers up her courage and crosses to* THE WOMAN. *Rain is pouring in and she closes and locks window. Kneels beside* THE WOMAN.*)* What is it—what has happened? *(*THE WOMAN *does not answer as she is in a dead faint.)* Mrs. Murdock! Mrs. Murdock! Come here—quick! *(*ERMA *kneels beside her and puts her hand in lap.)*

MRS. MURDOCK *(Enters quickly Left.)* Ye called me, lass? What do you want? *(Sees* THE WOMAN *and crosses quickly to* ERMA.*)* Who is it, lass?

ERMA. Oh, I don't know. I heard a scratching at the windows, opened them, and found a little kitten. When I picked it up, I must have left the windows open. The lights went out and the next thing I knew, *she* fell into the room. Help me put her on the—why, she's *gagged! (Takes handkerchief from about* THE WOMAN'S *mouth and they raise her*

to her feet.)

MRS. MURDOCK. And look! The poor bairn's hands are tied behind her back! *(She unties rope from the* WOMAN'S *wrist while* ERMA *supports her, then they bring her down to the davenport.)*

ERMA. She's wet through. *(*ERMA *and the* WOMAN *sit on the davenport.)* For Heaven's sake, see whether I locked those windows and we'll try to revive her. *(*MRS. MURDOCK *looks at the fastening of the windows while* ERMA *strokes the* WOMAN'S *head which is resting on her shoulder.)* There, there, dear. You're all right now. You're with friends here, dear. There . . . there! *(The* WOMAN *stirs and moans.)* Hurry, Mrs. Murdock. Bring some water quickly! *(She gets water from pitcher on desk.)* It's all right, dear. *(The* WOMAN *moans.* ERMA *tries to comfort the* WOMAN.*)*

MRS. MURDOCK. Here ye are, lass. Oh, what a night—what a night! *(Comes Right,* ERMA *takes handkerchief which was tied about the* WOMAN'S *face, pours a little water on it and bathes the* WOMAN'S *forehead and wrists with it.)*

WOMAN *(Moans . . . stirs . . . and opens eyes . . . raises to elbow.)* I'm safe . . . Safe! *(Speaks with difficulty, as if with a swollen tongue.)*

ERMA. You are with friends here, dear.

WOMAN *(Mumbles.)* Glad . . . I'm . . . safe . . .

ERMA *(Supporting her with one arm behind her back.)* What happened to you?

WOMAN. I was tied—in a boat—set adrift—on the lake.

ERMA *(Horrified.)* You mean that some one—tried—to—to . . . ?

WOMAN *(In a burst of energy.) Murder me*—yes.

ERMA. Good Heavens!

MRS. MURDOCK. It can't be possible that anyone would be so cruel.

WOMAN *(Nods, chooses her words with great care . . . hesitating between each sentence.)* Yes. The boat leaked—water *poured* in. I guess I fainted—for the next thing I knew—boat was full. Had hard time keeping head above water. But I—did—not—sink—thank God! *(Leans back weakly.* ERMA *supports the* WOMAN *upright.)*

ERMA. How dreadful! How did you get *here?*

WOMAN. Boat grounded—threw me on shore. Got to knees—somehow. Saw lights—staggered on—and and on—found window open. Rest—not—clear. *(Sighs, exhausted.)*

ERMA. Oh, you poor girl. Do you know who attacked you?

WOMAN *(Fiercely.)* Yes—*yes!* He has good reason to want me out of the way. I know too much. *(Door bell rings off stage. The* WOMAN *shrinks back with a frightened little "OH".)*

ERMA. Don't be frightened. It's probably the boatman coming back.

MRS. MURDOCK. I locked the door after him, lass.

ERMA. See who it is, but put the chain on before you open the door wide.

MRS. MURDOCK. Trust me to be careful, lass. *(Places the glass on table Left as she passes. Exits Left, shutting doors behind her.)*

ERMA. Do you feel better now? *(The* WOMAN *nods.)* What were you doing out here . . . at night?

WOMAN. I was trying to find a house. *(Wearily.)*

ERMA. What house?

WOMAN. Mystery Manor.

ERMA *(Rather surprised.)* Why, *this* is Mystery Manor.

WOMAN *(Leaning forward, breathlessly.)* And you . . . *you* are . . . ?

ERMA. I am Erma Lowrie.

WOMAN. Oh, then I *am* in time . . . I am in time. *(Hysterically.)* I am in *time!*

ERMA. Why . . . I don't quite understand . . .

WOMAN. It was you I was coming to see when I was attacked, bound, gagged and set adrift in a leaking boat. *(Leans forward . . . talks rapidly and clearly in her excitement.)* Miss Lowrie, you are in terrible danger.

ERMA *(Backing Center.)* I am?

WOMAN. Yes—oh yes. You must leave here at once. Don't delay! *Go!* Anywhere, but don't spend the night in this awful house.

ERMA. Why? Who would harm *me?*

WOMAN. I'll tell you all. You *must* know.

ERMA. What is there to tell?

WOMAN. You shall know. But first, please see that no one is behind those doors. *(Nods to door Left.* ERMA *hesitates.)*

ERMA. You—you frighten me.

WOMAN *(Earnestly.)* Do as I ask. Oh, please hurry! There is no time to lose.

ERMA. Yes, of course. *(*ERMA *hesitates . . . then crosses Left slowly . . . opens doors and looks out into hall. As soon as her back is turned, the entire bookcase above davenport swings open slowly towards audience. A tiger's claw and arm are seen to reach out and down—touches the* WOMAN *on couch on her shoulder—lights go out. She screams—the room is pitch dark.)* Don't be frightened. These lights have gone out several times tonight. They'll be on in a minute. *(Lights come up . . . The bookcase is closed and the* WOMAN *his disappeared.* ERMA *is just turning away from the doors Left.)* Ah . . . there they are now. *(She turns and gets almost to davenport, when she sees that the* WOMAN *has vanished and the davenport is empty. The windows are open—swinging in the wind.* ERMA *stops short—then screams.) My God!!! (Whirls and starts Left. Red lamp in painting above fireplace lights up a bright red. She screams again.)* Arthur! Mac! *Come here! Oh! (She starts to run Left but sways and faints to floor Center. Bookcase is opening slowly as the curtain falls.)*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

The scene is the same as in Act One, fifteen minutes later. ERMA *is stretched on the davenport still in a dead faint.* SOPHIA *kneels beside her, bathing her face from a pan of water which* MRS. MURDOCK *holds at the head of the davenport. The windows are still open. But since the wind has died down they are not blowing open and shut.* ARTHUR *is walking up and down in the Center of the room, still leaning on his cane. After the curtain is well up, he stops Center.*

ARTHUR. Hasn't she come to yet?

SOPHIA. Not yet! Oh, my poor girl!

ARTHUR. How did it happen?

SOPHIA *(Continues to bathe* ERMA'S *face and wrists.)* Oh, I don't know. There, there, dear. *(Sniffs.)*

MRS. MURDOCK. She screamed just as the lights went out and then I heard her fall. I had just gone to answer the door bell.

ARTHUR. Who was there?

MRS. MURDOCK. No one, sir. I am sure I heard it ring. Miss Erma heard it, too; she thought it might be the boatman coming back.

ARTHUR. You were here—with Erma—before she fainted, then?

MRS. MURDOCK. Yes, sir. She called me in when the other woman came.

ARTHUR *(Surprised.)* What other woman?

MRS. MURDOCK. She came out of the storm, sir. Miss Erma let her in, I guess. *(Anxiously . . . showing fear in her voice.)* Oh, sir, something terrible must have happened. I left her in this room with Miss Erma. Now she is gone and . . .

ARTHUR. Gone—where?

MRS. MURDOCK. If I only knew, sir.

SOPHIA. She must have frightened my poor lamb into this faint.

MRS. MURDOCK *(Comes Center as* SOPHIA *takes pan from*

her and places it on the floor by her side.) She was terribly wrought up and . . .

ARTHUR. Well, let's not waste any more time talking about it. We'd better search the house, Mrs. Murdock.

MRS. MURDOCK. Yes, sir. She must be found. She knows something . . . *(Crossing Left when* ARTHUR *stops her.)*

ARTHUR. Wait! Did you recognize her?

MRS. MURDOCK. I've never seen her before in all my life, sir. *(Exits Left, shutting doors behind her.)*

SOPHIA *(As* ERMA *moans and moves.)* She's all right now. *(Pets her.)* There, there, dear. Aunt Sophia is with you. *(*ARTHUR *crosses Right Center.)*

ERMA. O-h-h! *(Moans and raises herself on elbow.)* Where . . . where is she? *(Still a little bewildered.)* She vanished right before my eyes.

SOPHIA. Who, dear?

ERMA. That woman.

SOPHIA *(To* ARTHUR.*)* Then there *was* a woman!

ARTHUR. Of course, there was. Mrs. Murdock wasn't lying.

ERMA. What has happened?

SOPHIA. Mrs. Murdock heard you scream and called us.

ARTHUR. And we found you on the floor . . .

ERMA *(Weakly rises to a sitting posture—leans back on davenport.)* Yes, I know. There was a woman . . .

SOPHIA. Yes, Mrs. Murdock told us.

ERMA. That's so. *(Leans forward—earnestly.)* Oh, where did she go? It was uncanny. She was sitting here—where I am—before the lights went out. And when they came on again, she had vanished.

ARTHUR. She probably left the house in the darkness.

ERMA. But the windows were locked and I stood by the doors there. I'll swear she didn't pass *me.*

ARTHUR *(Goes up to window.)* Well, the windows aren't *locked now. (Swings window open . . . rain comes in . . . he shuts and locks them.)*

ERMA *(Sighs in relief.)* Then she must have left the house. But she was so excited and wrought up. She had just warned me . . .

ARTHUR *(Quickly—coming back down Center.)* Warned you?

ERMA *(Nods.)* She said I was in terrible danger.

ARTHUR. In danger—of what?

ERMA. I don't know.

SOPHIA. Was that the reason you fainted? *(She has arisen and sits on upper edge of davenport beside* ERMA.*)*

ERMA. Yes, because of her disappearance . . . and the red lamp. *(Shivers and looks towards painting.)*

ARTHUR. Lamp—what lamp?

ERMA. *That* one. *(Points to painting.)* I know it seems silly, but—but—it seemed to me that it lighted up—a bright red.

SOPHIA. You don't say!

ARTHUR *(Laughs.)* Just your nerves, Erma.

ERMA. Nerves nothing! I saw it distinctly, and I don't usually imagine things.

SOPHIA *(Gasps.)* And when the lamp burns red . . .

ERMA *(Thoughtfully.)* . . . somebody dies.

ARTHUR. Absurd! *(Snorts in derision.)*

ERMA *(Laughs uneasily.)* Yes, you're right, Arthur. Superstition is a silly thing. After all, it's only a painted lamp.

SOPHIA. Perhaps someone is trying to frighten you away from the house.

ARTHUR *(Sits Center.)* I believe you've hit it, Aunt Sophia. I'll admit that all the things that have happened look like more than mere coincidences.

ERMA. It's some one who knows, that in order to retain this property, I must *live* here.

ARTHUR. But what would be the object of these disturbances?

ERMA. I'm sure I don't know. If I *should* leave the place, no one else would get it. In that case, it all goes to charity.

SOPHIA. Well, I'll admit they've succeeded if they're trying to frighten *me*. I'm scared stiff.

ARTHUR. Buck up, Auntie. I'm here. *(Laughs.)*

SOPHIA *(Sniffs.)* A precious lot of good *you'd* do—with your lame foot.

ERMA. That was unkind, Auntie.

ARTHUR. Oh, I'm not sensitive.

SOPHIA. I'm sorry I said it whether you're sensitive or not.

ERMA. Nevertheless I am mighty glad that you *are* here, Arthur. *(Hand to her head—leans back.)* I still feel a trifle dizzy.

SOPHIA. Of course, dear. You're still weak.

MRS. MURDOCK *(Enters Left . . . comes Left Center.)* I've been all through the house, Miss. She's not here.

ARTHUR. You see, she *must* have taken advantage of the sudden darkness to leave. I'll bet she was here for no good purpose, and was frightened away before she could accomplish it.

MRS. MURDOCK. No, sir. The poor lady was in a fearful fret, and left against her will. I don't like to frighten the lassies any more than they are, but there is devil's work going on in this house.

ARTHUR. Don't be idiotic! There is a logical explanation for all that has happened.

MRS. MURDOCK. The house is evil—I *know*. *(Exits Left, mumbling to herself.)*

ERMA. Well, I'll admit that I don't know just *what* to think. There is, of course, a logical reason for that girl's disappearance. But I don't believe she deliberately ran away. She was too much in earnest and seemed to be in terrible distress. And when she first staggered into the room she was bound and gagged.

ARTHUR *(*ARTHUR *and* SOPHIA *glance at her quickly. The wind continues to moan occasionally through this scene, but the storm has abated considerably.)* What?

ERMA. She said someone had set her adrift in a leaky boat to keep her from warning me of impending danger.

ARTHUR. Did she say what the danger might be?

ERMA *(Shakes her head.* ARTHUR *leans back in his chair and* SOPHIA *keeps her eyes on* ERMA, *wondering at this new development.)* No, for just then the lights went out. *(Rises and moves toward* ARTHUR.*)* There is something queer about this house, Art, and I have made up my mind to . . .

SOPHIA *(Hopefully leaning forward.)* To leave?

ERMA. *No!* To *stay! (Moves Center.* SOPHIA *sighs disappointedly.)* This is *my* house, and if I have to fight to prove my right to it—well, I guess I can do it. *(Goes Left Center a little breathless, now that she has spoken her mind. She must try to convey that, although she is nervous and afraid at heart, she has determined to show a brave exterior.)*

ARTHUR *(Rises wih the help of a cane and follows her over.)* Well spoken, Erma.

SOPHIA. She has more nerve than I have.

ERMA. Oh, I am not trying to be heroic. I am tired of working for a living, and I'm determined that no one shall wrest from me what is rightfully mine. That's all. *(Goes up to fireplace.* ARTHUR *moves Left a little.)* Now suppose we try to reason things out—just as they have happened—in a logical manner. *(Turns to the lamp and points to the painting.)* That lamp certainly lighted up. I did *not* imagine it, and my eyesight is perfectly normal. *(Comes down Center.)* Besides, you saw the eyes shine, too, Auntie. Remember?

SOPHIA. I'm certain they did. *(Shudders at the recollection.)* It was positively uncanny!

ERMA *(To* ARTHUR *who is Left of table Left.)* You see, Art? *(Looks closely at painting, then turns to the others again quickly and with a look of discovery.)* You know, I believe the paint on that canvas is luminous and shines in the dark.

ARTHUR *(Goes up to the painting.)* That *does* sound logical. *(Peers as closely at the painting as he can on tiptoe.)* It looks as though it might be. I believe it reflects the electric light too.

ERMA. Well, it's easily proved. Turn the switch, Art, will you?

SOPHIA *(Rises . . . alarmed.)* Oh, you're not going to turn out the lights!

ERMA. Of course . . .

SOPHIA *(Goes up Center.)* Oh, don't please! I couldn't stand the dark—just now! Not after all that's happened.

ARTHUR. She's right. It's ghostly enough with the lights on.

ERMA *(Laughs a little.)* Why, Art! Surely *you* haven't become nervous. *(Comes down Center.)* All right, Auntie. But that theory disposes of anything supernatural about the picture.

ARTHUR *(Coming back down Left Center.)* You'll find that the mysterious disappearance of your nocturnal visitor has just as good an explanation. *(Suddenly turns to her.)* How about *Yami?*

ERMA *(Not understanding.)* Yami?

ARTHUR *(Enthusiastically.)* Yes. I'll bet *he's* at the bottom of all this. He looks tricky.

SOPHIA *(Coming down Right Center.)* That's just what *I've* been trying to tell her.

ARTHUR. Just what do you know about him?

ERMA. Enough to know that he is above suspicion. *(Goes Right, restlessly.)* The only thing that worries *me* is that escaped Tiger. If that woman is roaming around the countryside now, she must be in terrible danger—unless they've managed to capture it. *(Sits on davenport. Shivers in spite of herself.)* Oh, I wish it were daylight.

SOPHIA *(Solicitously rises and goes to* ERMA *and sits on the upper edge of the davenport with arm about* ERMA, *consoling her.)* There, there, dear. The beast will be killed or captured soon, and then all your worries will be over. *(Door bell rings sharply. They all start and look toward doors Left.)* There are the men now!

ARTHUR. Perhaps I had better be on hand when Mrs. Murdock opens the door. She's old and may need my moral support. *(Laughs and goes towards doors Left . . . Turns back a little.)* Unless you folks want me to stay here?

ERMA. No, we're all right.

ARTHUR. It's just as well to be on the safe side, you know. *(Exits Left, closing doors.)*

ERMA *(Leans back, closes eyes wearily.)* Oh, I am so tired.

SOPHIA. Poor dear. You've had a trying experience. Do you want a drink of water?

ERMA. All right, dear. There's some on the table—if you don't mind.

SOPHIA. Why, of course not. *(*ERMA *leans forward to allow* SOPHIA *to withdraw her arm from behind her.* SOPHIA *rises and goes to table Left. As she starts across the stage, the panel over the davenport opens again and the Tiger's Claws reaches slowly out and down and are just about to touch* ERMA *when she drops her handkerchief and leans over to pick it up, thereby getting out of the Tiger's reach. This business should be fairly slow and deliberate, to get the thrill across . . . NOT hurried.* SOPHIA *has poured the water from the pitcher which is on the table into a glass and now turns to come back. The claws draw back and the bookcase closes noiselessly, but* SOPHIA *does NOT see any of this business.)* Here, dear. This will refresh you. *(*ERMA *takes the water with a murmured "Thank You" and drinks it gratefully, handing the glass back to* SOPHIA.*)*

ERMA *(Relaxing with a sigh.)* It was just what I needed.

PEG *(Enters Left with a bag, all dressed to leave.)* Erma, I'm sorry, but I just can't stay out the night in your funny house. It's too much for *me.*

ERMA *(Rises.)* Why, Peg, what do you mean?

PEG. Well, every place I turn I find that fellow Yami watching me. And when I was washing up I heard knocks and raps on the walls, and felt unseen eyes watching me while I—well, it's too much. I can't be bothered. Of course, it *may* be the excitement of last night—but—I'll feel better in my boy friend's arms.

ERMA. But Peg, it's two miles to our nearest neighbors. *(Crosses Center to meet* PEG.*)*

PEG. I'll go back with the animal trainer. He's outside now. I just saw him from the window. I shan't mind. He can protect me. I've trained men, and he's trained animals. Same thing. So I guess we'll get along all right. Good-bye. *(*PEG *exits Left.)*

ERMA *(Starts to follow her.)* But Peg . . .

SOPHIA. Let her go, Erma. That man will protect her and he's going back to the village, I guess. You'd be a wreck with her around much longer.

ERMA. It *will* be a relief from her incessant slang. *(*MACINTOSH *and* ARTHUR *enter Left.* MACINTOSH *comes*

Center. ERMA *crosses to him, eager for news.)* Oh, I'm so glad you've returned safely.

MAC. You've got nothing on me, Miss.

ERMA *(*SOPHIA *puts glass on pedestal.)* Where is Mr. Thompson?

MAC. He left me at the gate. He said he was going back to town to find out of any of his men had captured the tiger.

ERMA. Good. Then I won't have to worry about Peggy.

ARTHUR *(Coming down Left Center.)* Didn't you see it?

MAC. Not even a sign.

ERMA. Did you meet anyone outside? *(She is referring to the* MYSTERY WOMAN.*)*

MAC. Not a soul, thank Heaven, except Miss Van Ess. There isn't much danger of many people being out on a night like this. *(Crosses up Left Center.)*

SOPHIA. Well, I feel relieved, but my nerves are in a terrible state.

ARTHUR *(Glances at wrist watch.)* Eight-thirty. Rather early to hit the hay, but I'm dead tired. So, if the excitement has completely died out, and you folks have no objections, I think I'll go to bed.

OSWALD *(Enters quickly Left. He has on a lounging robe of startling colors.)* Erma, when do we eat?

ERMA. Why, do you know we've completely forgotten to eat dinner?

SOPHIA. That's so.

ARTHUR *(Turns to* OSWALD.*)* Well, where have *you* been?

OSWALD. In my room, with the door locked against that awful woman.

ERMA. Well, she won't bother you any more, Oswald. She has gone to the station.

OSWALD. Good riddance. I can breathe in peace once more. I've been going over my specimens and I find them all in perfect order. *(Notices* MACINTOSH *and* ARTHUR, *moves Right.)* Oh, you're back? Did you get the tiger?

MAC. No, not even a sight of him.

OSWALD. Do you know, I thought I heard some one scream a short while ago? But the thunder and lightning made so much noise that I wasn't certain. And then, I was

so engrossed in getting my specimens distributed that I didn't pay much attention. *(Notices the strained atmosphere.)* Why, what's the matter? Has anything else happened?

SOPHIA. I should say there has!

ERMA. Don't frighten him any more, Auntie. *(She crosses Right. Says this in sotto voice but* OSWALD *catches it.)*

OSWALD. Frighten me? You don't mean that there are more ghosts?

ERMA. Something startled me, and I fainted . . . very foolishly. That is all. *(To others, in general.)* Well, how about eating? I guess Yami has kept things warm.

ARTHUR. Well, I'm not hungry now.

SOPHIA. Neither am I.

OSWALD. Well, I *am!*

MAC. Nothing for me, thanks.

ERMA. Nor me. I couldn't eat a thing after all the excitement I've been through.

OSWALD. Well, then, I guess I'll have to eat alone.

ERMA. It looks that way—if you don't mind.

OSWALD. Heavens no, I'll get a lunch and take it up to my room. I have a lot of work to do before I go to bed.

SOPHIA *(Rather fretfully.)* I know I shan't sleep a wink tonight. My nerves are raw.

ERMA. You can sleep with me, dear, if it will reassure you any.

SOPHIA. Then I'll be all right, but I won't be reassured.

ARTHUR. Well, I guess I'll say good night. *(Goes Left.* SOPHIA *moves towards Center.* ERMA *counters Right.)*

SOPHIA. I'll let you escort me up the stairs, Arthur. They're so dark.

ARTHUR. I'll be glad to.

SOPHIA. Coming, Erma?

ERMA. Not yet, dear. I want to see that all the doors and windows are locked before I go up.

SOPHIA. You ought to go to bed and get some rest after today's excitement, dear.

ERMA. Oh, I feel much better now. Don't wait up for me. I won't be very long. *(She is anxious to have them all leave.)*

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SOPHIA. Well, I'll not go to sleep until you come up. *(Goes to door Left . . . Turns.)* Good night, Oswald.

OSWALD. Nighty-night.

SOPHIA. Good night, Mr. MacIntyre.

MAC. Mac*Intosh*, Ma'am. Good night.

ARTHUR. Are you sure you're all right, Erma?

ERMA. Why, of course, silly. Mr. MacIntosh will see that I come to no harm, eh? *(Smiles at* MACINTOSH. *He comes down into scene.)*

MAC. I'll do my best, Miss.

ARTHUR. Well, good night, then. If you need me, just call. Come on, Aunt Sophia. *(Turns and takes her by arm, and they both exit Left.* MACINTOSH *and* ERMA *exchange glances . . . she goes towards* OSWALD.*)*

ERMA. Run along and get your lunch, Oswald. You seem to be the only one who wants anything.

OSWALD. Oh yes, my lunch. *(Goes to door Left, turns . . . and looks back.)* Do—do—you really think this house is haunted, Erma?

ERMA. Of course not.

OSWALD. Well, whether it is or not, I shall burn my light all night. *(Exits Left. There is a slight pause until his footsteps have completely died out down the hall. Then* ERMA *sighs with relief and* MACINTOSH *starts impulsively to her.)*

MAC. At last we're alone!

ERMA *(Holds him back as he starts to embrace her.)* Hush! You must be careful!

MAC. Don't you think I have been?

ERMA *(Going Right.)* Yes, you've been a very good boy.

MAC *(Follows her over Right.)* I should say I have. If you only knew what it has cost me to keep silent and see you so afraid . . .

ERMA. Afraid?

MAC. Yes, Erma, afraid. For no matter how brave you pretend to be, I know that inside you are almost sick with fear.

ERMA *(Drops all pretense and goes to him.)* You're right, Mac. I don't know what I should have done if you hadn't been near me.

MAC. Sweetheart! *(They kiss.)* Does your Aunt suspect?

ERMA. No, not a thing. Poor Auntie is frightened almost out of her wits. For this house has certainly seemed to live up to its reputation during the last few hours. But if she knew that a real detective . . .

MAC. Not so loud! If I am to help you, no one must suspect me. *(Goes Left Center, looking towards doors.)*

ERMA. Perhaps I was foolish to send you that wire. But I was so alone, and such queer things had happened, that I felt you ought to be here. I thought perhaps you could succeed where others have failed in unravelling the mystery of poor Aunt Sylvia's death. *(Comes Center.)* Oh Mac, I'm certain that someone is trying to frighten me away from this house.

MAC. Personally, I think this Phantom Tiger stuff is all bunk. But it has given me an excuse to be near you again so I'm not kicking. *(Looks around the room.)* This is surely a wonderful old house. Who would ever dream that my little Department Store sweetheart would turn out to be a real heiress?

ERMA *(Going Left Center slowly.)* During the past few days I have often wished that I was back there again . . . free from all this superstition and worry.

MAC. But you *are* going to stay?

ERMA. Oh yes. With you here, I know that I'm safe. *(She smiles at him. He crosses to her and they embrace Left Center.)*

MAC. I'll do my best to lay out your *ghosts* for you. *(Laughs and turns facing her.)*

ERMA. I can't help wondering, though, who that woman *was*, and *why*, or *how*, she disappeared so suddenly.

MAC. What woman?

ERMA. Oh, I forgot to tell you. *You* weren't here, were you? Well . . . *(Starts to tell him . . . A masked face appears at the window . . . lighted up by a green pocket flash.* MACINTOSH *sees it over her shoulders . . . then turns facing audience, acting unconcerned. Speaks in a lowered voice.)*

MAC. *Shh!* Don't move or act frightened. Someone is watching us from the windows.

ERMA *(Involuntarily moves closer to him . . . gasping faintly.)* Oh!

MAC. Careful now . . .

ERMA *(Gets control of herself—speaks slowly and fearfully.)* I'm all right. What shall we do?

MAC. Say "goodnight" casually, and go out of the room. Get Mrs. Murdock and come back. I'll keep this individual busy watching *me. (Eyes disappear.)*

ERMA *(Goes Left of him, yawns and turns with hand outstretched.)* Good night, Mr. MacIntosh.

MAC *(Both speak in a loud voice.)* Good night, Miss. *(*MACINTOSH *does not take her hand . . . he nods towards door . . . She looks frightened and exits quickly Left . . . closing doors.* MACINTOSH *looks after her . . . stretches . . . goes slowly up to the fireplace where he is out of sight of the window. He edges, with back to wall, close to the Left side of the window. He draws revolver and cautiously reaches out, opening latch, still keeping body flat against the wall. The windows start opening by themselves . . . slowly and noiselessly. He backs Left in front of fireplace opening. He levels revolver.)* Who's there? *(There is a pause, during which the windows continue to open.)* Answer—or I'll shoot! *(The scratching is repeated and he levels revolver to fire. The panel in the fireplace flies up noiselessly, revealing a thick black hole. The Tiger's Claws appear out of the darkness and fix themselves about his throat. He struggles, but cannot cry out. In spite of all his efforts he is drawn slowly into the aperture, the panel closes again and the room is empty. There is a sufficient pause to place the effect. And then* ERMA, *followed by* MRS. MURDOCK, *enters from Left.)*

ERMA. Mac . . . *(She advances to Center before she sees that he is gone. She stops short and looks about.)* Why, he's *gone!*

MRS. MURDOCK *(Notices that the windows are open and the draperies are blowing about by the force of the wind.)* The windows are open, lass. He must have gone out that way. *(Closes them but does not lock them. Comes back down into the room Center.)*

ERMA *(Helplessly.)* Oh, I'm afraid. The person watch-

ing us has probably lured him out there—into the night . . .

MRS. MURDOCK. No, lass. He must have opened the windows himself. I know they were locked on the inside. He is no doubt following your unseen watcher.

ERMA. Yes. That must be it. But I wish that he had waited until I came back.

MRS. MURDOCK. He is a brawny young one, lass, and appears able to take care of himself.

ERMA *(Is slightly reassured but is still apprehensive for the man she loves.)* Nevertheless, I shall worry until he returns. In this house the most commonplace events take on an uncanny significance. *(Goes Right . . . and turns back, with a thoughtful frown.)* Mrs. Murdock, I have come to the conclusion that our Mystery Woman was demented.

MRS. MURDOCK. Maybe, lass. Her actions were certainly daft.

ERMA. There was a wild light in her eyes that frightened me. And yet, why were her hands tied, and why was she gagged?

MRS. MURDOCK. If her story is true, lass, we can easily prove it in the morning.

ERMA. How?

MRS. MURDOCK. Hasn't it occurred to you? Search the beach for a leaky boat.

ERMA. That's a good idea, Mrs. Murdock. We'll do that. I only hope that's *all* we find. *(Looks around nervously.)* Oh, why doesn't Mac come back? Something must have happened to him. *(She is pacing up and down the room . . . to the windows and back again down Center.)*

MRS. MURDOCK. Ye call him Mac, lass. Have ye known him before?

ERMA *(Stops short, rather confused.)* Why—why, of course not. What a silly idea! *(Gives a little strained laugh and toys with handkerchief, with eyes down, guiltily.)*

MRS. MURDOCK *(Chuckles.)* Mayhap, but it seems to me that no young girl in these times worries as much as you do over a man she has just met. And her own servant, too!

ERMA *(Looks up and smiles.)* Mrs. Murdock, your eyes are keen.

MRS. MURDOCK. Ye are a brave lass, and if it is as I suspect, ye did the right thing in sending for him to come here.

ERMA. Why, how did you know that I did?

MRS. MURDOCK. The man at the station told me that you had wired some one in the city to "Come at once".

ERMA *(Laughs, a little relieved.)* I know I can trust you, Mrs. Murdock, Mr. MacIntosh *is* a very dear friend of mine. I hope that you'll keep this a secret.

MRS. MURDOCK. I have forgotten already, Miss.

ARTHUR *(Enters Left, sees* ERMA *and* MRS. MURDOCK. *Pauses. He has his coat and vest off, but wears a modest dressing robe. Still carries his cane, however.)* Oh, not in bed yet, Erma?

ERMA. No, I—I wasn't sleepy.

ARTHUR *(Advances into room Left Center.)* Nor I. I thought I was dead tired when I went upstairs, but all that has happened since my arrival this evening kept buzzing around in my head, until I felt I had better read a while to get my mind off of it. So I came down here for a book.

ERMA. Of course. Help yourself, Art. *(She crosses into Center.)*

ARTHUR. Thanks. My advice to you is to get some sleep, Erma. You have had a very trying day. *(Goes to bookcase Right and starts selecting a book.* ERMA *goes to* MRS. MURDOCK *Left.)*

ERMA. I shall go to bed as soon as the boatman gets back and I know that every one is safely inside.

ARTHUR *(Turns face to her—looking over shoulder.)* Oh, he's gone out again?

ERMA. Yes. He thought he saw someone at the windows there. *(Nods towards windows up Right.)* I went to call Mrs. Murdock while he kept guard. But when I returned, he had gone and the windows were open.

ARTHUR. Everyone seems to be seeing things since that Tiger scare. *(He has selected a book . . . now turns with back to bookcase, lays cane on davenport. Looks over the book he has selected.)*

ERMA *(To* MRS. MURDOCK . . . *putting hand on her shoul-*

der.) Go to bed, Mrs. Murdock. I'll wait up for Mr. MacIntosh.

MRS. MURDOCK. Ye're not afraid, lass?

ERMA. Of course not—while Arthur is here. Go ahead. *(Bookcase Right starts opening slowly, but closes as* ARTHUR *moves Center.* ERMA *is facing* MRS. MURDOCK.*)*

MRS. MURDOCK. Then good night, lass, and may *"He"* watch over ye and protect ye from . . . *(Pauses . . . looks at* ARTHUR . . . *nods to painting.)* . . . from *her. (Exits Left . . . closes doors behind her.)*

ERMA *(Turns back to* ARTHUR, *who stands Right Center looking through the book he has selected.)* Arthur, you really should have a bite to eat before going to bed.

ARTHUR. I'm not a bit hungry, thanks. I couldn't eat if I tried.

ERMA. You don't know how sorry I am about all this excitement here.

ARTHUR. Now, don't go over all that again. I only worry for *you.*

ERMA *(Nervously.)* Oh, I'm all right. *(Sits Center.)*

ARTHUR. I am convinced that you are *not* all right.

ERMA. Why, surely you don't believe . . . ?

ARTHUR. I believe nothing but what I *see.* It is evident to me that someone is using the reputation of this house to cover up his own evil designs.

ERMA. But why—why? I've racked my brains until my mind is weary—just to find a motive. Whom do you suspect?

ARTHUR. *Yami!*

ERMA. Yami?

ARTHUR. Isn't he the logical one to suspect? He claims to be a Hindu. But why couldn't he be an African just as well?

ERMA *(Gasps.)* Oh! You—you—mean . . . ?

ARTHUR. The collar of jewels!

ERMA. I—I never thought of that. But why African?

ARTHUR *(Sits on left end of davenport.)* Because Africa is where the cult flourishes and a fanatical cult like those of the African Interior would stop at nothing to avenge your

Aunt's theft and regain possession of the collar. He was here when she died, wasn't he?

ERMA *(Slowly pondering.)* Yes.

ARTHUR. It all fits together like the pieces of a puzzle. Just suppose he was the High Priest and followed her here? He secured a position in the household where he could roam about at will—playing on Aunt Sylvia's superstition—knowing that she was a professional medium—always searching for the jewel collar. Suppose she had hidden the collar where it couldn't be found? And suppose that he finally exposed his hand and she refused to give it up? Can't you see what would happen then?

ERMA *(Gasps, as she realizes that his theory is the best one.)* Oh! It's too awful!

ARTHUR. But doesn't my theory throw light on the mystery of her death? *(He is enthusiastic over his ideas and speaks almost breathlessly.)* You know, they *do* kill that way. I've read a lot about the Tiger cult. They have long, razor-edged metal talons that go over their own fingers. They make a kill, and when found their victims are slashed and gashed in exactly the same manner in which a real tiger kills his prey.

ERMA *(Horrified.)* Oh, Arthur!

ARTHUR. I don't like to frighten you, dear. But I *do* want to clear up all the mystery surrounding your house.

ERMA. What you say *is* logical—horribly so. But if it is true, why is he still here?

ARTHUR. Perhaps he couldn't find the jewels. Wouldn't that account for all that has happened? Possibly he's trying desperately to get you away from the house so that he can completely wreck it—leaving no hiding place untouched.

ERMA. But who was that woman?

ARTHUR. An accomplice—telling that weird story to scare you. You'll notice that she disappeared before she could finish her story.

ERMA. I—I believe you're right.

ARTHUR *(Rises and crosses to her.)* I'm certain of it.

ERMA. But that makes me more frightened than ever. To

think that there may be a murderer in the house! *(Looks fearfully about.)*

ARTHUR *(Places hand on her shoulder reassuringly.)* I don't believe that he wants to do us any harm—unless we should stand in his way. But it will be just as well for you to sleep with your door locked and a revolver close beside you. Tomorrow you can discharge him or hand him over to the authorities on a trumped-up charge to get him out of the house.

ERMA. What a help you have been, Art.

ARTHUR. If you would only let me fight your battles, Erma. Give me the right . . . *(There is a crash of breaking glass as a small stone with a note tied about it is thrown through the windows on the stage Center . . .* ERMA *gives an involuntary scream and steps Left.* ARTHUR *rushes up to windows.)*

ERMA. Oh!

ARTHUR. Stay here. I'll see who threw that. *(He rushes out up Right through windows after hastily unlocking them. Draws revolver as he exits . . . forgetting his cane in his excitement.* ERMA *picks up stone—undoes the string and reads.)*

ERMA *(Reading.)* "Will not be back tonight. Am O. K. Don't worry, Mac." *(Rushes up to window and calls off Right.)* Oh, Arthur, come back! It's all right. *(He has evidently gone beyond the reach of her voice. She turns back down stage Right Center undecided what to do next. As* ERMA *looks Left, she gives a start upon seeing* YAMI, *who has quietly entered and stands staring at her with folded arms. She backs slowly Right until she is standing directly in front of the davenport . . . gazing at him and thinking about the theory that* ARTHUR *had advanced. She believes herself in the presence of a killer.* YAMI *advances to Center slowly. This is suspense business and must be played slowly . . . A pause.)* Why, Yami. I—I thought everyone had gone to bed.

YAMI *(Without taking his eyes from hers.)* No one has gone to bed, Mem Sahib.

ERMA. Wh-What do you mean?

YAMI. I want a few words with you, Mem Sahib.

ERMA. At this time of night? *(Glances hopefully at windows playing for time.)*

YAMI. If you are tired, I will wait until morning.

ERMA. Yes, I *am* tired, Yami. So if you *will* wait . . .

YAMI *(Coming nearer Right Center.)* But-But—you are *not* tired . . . *(Comes closer to her . . . looking her straight in the eyes. She is terrified and is breathing heavily.)* . . . are you—*are* you, Mem Sahib?

ERMA. Why—why . . . *(He is slowly hypnotizing her.)* What are you doing? Your eyes . . .

YAMI. Sit down, Mem Sahib. Sit down . . .

ERMA. What are you doing? My head—swims . . . *(Her voice trails off . . . she sits on davenport.)*

YAMI *(She shakes head nervously as though shaking off some unseen power and starts to rise.) Please! (Motions to the davenport commandingly . . . She sits . . . absolutely in his power.)* You are safe with Yami, Mem Sahib. Yami, who would give his heart's blood rather than have one hair of your head harmed. I stood by that door just now and heard your cousin lay the blame of your aunt's death on me and I saw how you cringed back when I confronted you. My time has come to act. I knew that you would not listen to me, so I have partially hypnotized you.

ERMA *(In dazed tone.)* Yes, you have hypnotized me.

YAMI. Mem Sahib, we of the East know many things of which your *western* civilization is *ignorant. One* of these is the art of *hypnotism.* I have used this power on *you,* Mem Sahib, because I think that behind that innocent face you are concealing certain *knowledge* from me. *(Slowly crouching before her.)* You . . . are . . . *listening?*

ERMA *(Dreamily, as though in a trance.)* I . . . am . . . listening.

YAMI. Your mind is now receptive to *mine.* You will cease to be frightened of me and will deny your cousin's suspicious. Is that *clear,* Mem Sahib?

ERMA *(Dazedly.)* I . . . am . . . not frightened.

YAMI. And you will answer my questions *truthfully,* withholding nothing that I desire to *know?* Speak!

ERMA. My . . . mind . . . is . . . yours.

YAMI *(Smiles faintly and straightens up.)* Good! You have heard the story of the Tiger's *necklace.* Answer!

ERMA *(With a short, jerky nod.)* I . . . have . . . heard.

YAMI *(His voice rising, shooting the declaration at her.)* And you *know* where it is *hidden?*

ERMA *(After a slight pause.)* I . . . I . . .

YAMI. *Speak!*

ERMA *(Slowly shakes her head.)* No . . . No . . . !

YAMI. Think, Mem Sahib. You *must* know.

ERMA. I . . . do . . . not . . . *know.*

YAMI *(Furiously.)* You *do!* Your aunt *must* have left you instructions regarding the necklace when she bequeathed you the *house.*

ERMA *(Slowly.)* No, she . . . left . . . nothing.

YAMI *(Slowly exhales, in a long hissing.) So! (Wearily.)* Then I must . . . *stay.* I must use my magic *further* to . . . *(Turns back to her . . . commandingly.)* You will awaken soon, Mem Sahib. What I have just said will be erased from your mind as though it had never *happened.* You will *forget.* Do you *understand,* Mem Sahib?

ERMA. I . . . understand.

YAMI. It is good. *(*SOPHIA *screams, faintly, off Left . . .* YAMI *whirls, looking at the doors Left . . . Frowns.)*

SOPHIA *(Off Left, her voice getting closer.)* Therma, Therma! *(Running footsteps are heard off Left . . .* YAMI *quickly backs up to the windows . . . Claps his hands sharply together . . .* ERMA *starts and wilts back into the couch . . .* YAMI *quickly exits through the windows, to the Left . . .* SOPHIA *bursts into the room . . . She is jabbering incoherently and wears a ridiculous dressing gown . . . Her hair is done up in curl papers.) Therma!* Oh, thair thu thar! *(She is wildly gesticulating.)*

ERMA *(Rises weakly, a hand to her forehead.)* Auntie, what . . . what has happened *now?*

SOPHIA *(Points to her puckered mouth, coming Left Center.)* Teef . . . teef . . . *gone!! (Wails the last word, on the verge of hysteria.)*

ERMA *(With a hand on the arm chair to support herself.)* Your *teeth?*

SOPHIA. Put in glass . . . of water . . . turned 'round . . . *gone! (Almost wails the last word.)*

ERMA *(Shakes her head in a puzzled manner . . . Still quite dazed.)* I . . . I'm sorry, Auntie. I . . . Oh, what's the matter with me? My head . . . I seem *dazed* . . . I . . .

SOPHIA *(Sitting Left of table, still wailing.) Dathed?* I . . . *I'm* flabber . . . flabber . . . *gasted!* My *teef* . . . the only teef I *had . . gone!* Thombody *thole* 'em!

ERMA *(Looking straight front, trying to gather her thoughts together.)* There seems to be something that I should *remember.* Something *important. . .* that's just recently *happened.*

SOPHIA *(Groans.)* Ith's my *teef!* Ghoths . . . *murderths* . . . and now my *teef!!!* I can't be *thene* without my *teef!!*

ERMA *(Crosses rather wearily to desk as* SOPHIA *starts weeping—pours her a large drink of brandy.)* For Heaven's sake, take this and stop wailing like a banshee. It will brace you up. *(Or, if it is not feasible to use brandy,* ERMA *may give her a bottle of spirits of ammonia which* SOPHIA *sniffs at until later when she begins drinking it in her excitement.)*

SOPHIA *(Looks at it doubtfully.)* Will it hurt me?

ERMA. Of course not.

SOPHIA. Well . . . *(Takes a sip . . . evidently likes it, and drinks the rest at a gulp.)* I'm *poisoned! (Coughs violently.)* No teef and poisoned!

ARTHUR *(Enters through windows. He is quite wet.* ERMA *rushes up to him Right Center.)* Whew! What weather!

ERMA. I'm glad you're back.

ARTHUR. I saw a figure run into the woods and I tried to catch it, but—no luck. I'm soaked. *(Takes off lounging robe and throws it on the couch.)*

ERMA. Listen, Art. You had no sooner gone than Yami came in. He had heard what you said . . .

ARTHUR. What! You were here—alone with him?

ERMA. Yes, I . . . oh, Art, I'm sure that you're mistaken about him. He's as harmless as a child.

ARTHUR *(Surprised.)* Harmless?

ERMA. Yes . . . I . . .

SOPHIA. Oh, my teef!

ARTHUR *(Sees* SOPHIA *for the first time.)* What's the matter with her?

ERMA. She's lost her teeth.

ARTHUR. Not really? *(*SOPHIA *nods her head sadly—the drinks are taking effect.)* Oh, that's too bad. *(Laughs heartily in spite of himself.)*

SOPHIA. Don't laugh! It's a terrible calamity. *(Has a hard time getting the word out . . . sputters over it.)*

ARTHUR. I'm sorry, Auntie. I was so excited that I forgot my cane. *(Goes to davenport and sees it . . . where he has left it when he selected his book.)* By the way, what was tied around that stone that was thrown through the window?

ERMA. Oh—I forgot. *(She has been holding the note tightly clenched in her hand since first reading it. She now shows it to* ARTHUR.*)* It was a note from Mac. Here.

ARTHUR *(He takes the note and reads.)* Um. So he won't be back tonight? He has acted queer ever since he came here. Why shouldn't he come back, and why should he take the trouble to inform you?

ERMA *(As he hands the note back to her.)* I—I don't know.

ARTHUR. He was probably Yami's partner. He helped him work the scares and has gone with him now.

ERMA. Nonsense! *(Turns in time to see* SOPHIA *unsteadily pouring out another drink . . . rises and goes Left Center.)* Careful, Auntie. That's awfully strong.

SOPHIA *(Giggles a little.)* I know it. *(Throws it down with a gulp.)* I need strength—lost my teef, you know—Hot, isn't it?

ARTHUR. Let her alone. It'll do her good. Well, Erma, your troubles are over at last. *(A low moan is heard coming from behind the fireplace.* SOPHIA *gasps . . . rises . . . pause . . . the moan comes again . . . she takes another drink.)*

ERMA What was that? *(Rises slowly.* ARTHUR *rushes up to the windows . . . looks out . . . shuts and locks them.)*

ARTHUR. Just the wind. I had forgotten to lock the windows.

SOPHIA. Ash 'ish too bad. Let the little wind moan . . . nice little wind. Blew 'way Sophie's teef. *(Sings unsteadily As she exits Left, closing doors behind her.)* "Oh, the wind blew high, o'er my old Kentucky home—" *(Her voice dies away down the hall.)*

ERMA. Why, she's getting tipsy!

ARTHUR *(Laughing.)* Getting, did you say? She *is.*

ERMA. Poor soul. I'd better put her to bed. *(Goes toward* ARTHUR.*)* Well, goodnight again, Art. I guess I owe you a lot for your help. I know I could never survive another night like this one. *(Offers her hand which he grasps fervently.)*

ARTHUR. You know how I feel, Erma. When I can be of service to you, it makes me very happy. Good night. *(She starts Left . . . red lamp in painting lights up bright red. She sees it and stops dead in her tracks.)*

ERMA and ARTHUR *(Together.) Look! The lamp!*

ARTHUR. I'm going to look into this! *(Starts to fireplace, light vanishes.)*

ERMA. Don't! It's gone. *(He stops . . . she joins him up Left Center.)* Arthur, that means something. It's a warning.

ARTHUR. We're both nervous. Don't imagine anything like that.

ERMA. I *feel* it. That has happened twice tonight. I am going to leave this house. I can stand so much, and no more.

ARTHUR. Don't lose heart now.

ERMA. The first thing in the morning, I'm going.

ARTHUR. Let's examine that picture.

ERMA. If you'll be careful.

ARTHUR. Trust me. We've got to get to the bottom of this. *(Gets chair from desk . . . puts it in front of fireplace . . . steps up on it and runs finger around frame of painting.)*

ERMA. Do be careful!

ARTHUR. Hello! This is funny!

ERMA *(Standing beside him on Right.)* Yes—what is it?

ARTHUR. There is a deep space all the way around on the inside of the moulding . . . *(Pokes his fingers in lower part.)* Phew!

ERMA *(Breathlessly.)* Yes?

ARTHUR *(Speaks excitedly.)* It feels like paper. *It is! (Draws out a large legal envelope, yellowed with age.)* It's a letter! *(Looks at it and reads with difficulty.)* "To My Dear Niece—Erma Lowrie." Why, it's for you, Erma. *(He gets down off chair and hands her letter.)*

ERMA. For me? *(Takes letter . . . tears it open and extracts a large sheet of paper which she reads. Crosses down to table.)* "If you succeed in discovering this letter, you are ingenious enough to do better. By this time, you have probably heard of the Tiger's necklace. The story is true. Since my return home my life has been in constant peril. I have hidden it where no one will find it unless I so desire. You are my heiress and I can trust you with my secret. When you find the collar, don't be tempted as I was, but return it with all possible haste to an address you will find with it. I can't. They don't trust *me,* because I stole it. May God forgive me. The full instructions are hidden in the back of my picture above the fireplace. Press the middle bud in the trio of flowers above the mantel. A panel will open. Go through the fireplace into the secret room. Press exactly the same spot on the other side—and see what happens. Your unhappy—AUNT SYLVIA." *(There is a pause.) Well!*

ARTHUR. A panel back of the fireplace!

ERMA. I—I can't believe it!

ARTHUR. Of course, you'll investigate?

ERMA *(Rather dazed.)* It's like a mystery story.

ARTHUR. What an adventure!

ERMA *(Looking at letter.)* "Full instructions are hidden in the back of my picture." There must be a hole cut through the wall.

ARTHUR. That might account for the lighting effect in the lamp. Maybe there's a light in there . . . it may have become short-circuited . . .

ERMA. Or, there may be someone behind that wall!

ARTHUR. You think so?

ERMA. I—I don't know. In his constant search, Yami may have found out about the secret room and . . .

ARTHUR. And has been using it to his own advantage?

ERMA. Exactly.

ARTHUR. Well, he's gone now. So you have no further cause for worry.

ERMA. But that lamp . . . ?

ARTHUR. There's a logical explanation for that—somehow. I'm all excited. *(Sudden idea.)* Let's try to open it! *(Crosses to Left Center.)*

ERMA. We might as well. *(Goes up beside him . . . refers to letter.)* "Press middle bud in trio of flowers." That must be . . . *(Runs her fingers over moulding above mantel.) Here! (She presses on moulding in exactly the middle of the fireplace . . . standing to Right side . . . the panel in back slides noiselessly upward revealing nothing but blackness.)* Oh-h-h-h!

ARTHUR. It's true!

ERMA. Oh, how creepy!

ARTHUR. Are we going in?

ERMA *(Hesitates.)* Suppose someone is in there?

ARTHUR. I'll go first.

ERMA. Wait—I'm not afraid—but—do you have a revolver?

ARTHUR. Yes. *(Draws it.)*

ERMA. We shouldn't take chances. You must remember I've had enough uncanny experiences tonight to drive a thrill hunter crazy.

ARTHUR. Well, we'll let it go until morning if you care to.

ERMA. No—we'll go—now. Come on. *(She starts in.)*

ARTHUR *(Holds her back.)* No, I'll go first. Give me your hand.

ERMA *(Gives him her hand.)* I wonder if we'll find anything?

ARTHUR. We will—I *know* it! Come! *(Exits into fireplace . . . she follows timidly . . . they melt into the dark-*

ness . . . there is a pause to put over the thrill . . . suddenly the panel closes with a snap . . . lights out . . . ERMA *gives a long drawn out scream back of fireplace . . . the eyes and the lamp in the picture light up as the curtain descends.)*

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

The Scene is the secret room behind the fireplace and should be a very small set, in order to carry out the idea that the room has been built between the exceptionally thick walls of the old mansion.

It is not more than ten feet high and eighteen feet across at the back, and in depth should be about twelve feet.

This is the reverse side of the wall in the setting of the first two acts, and the sliding panel of the fireplace is directly Center showing the grooves in which it works.

Above this panel, which is about six feet high, and in approximately the same position as the painting in the previous acts, is a small wooden panel, hinged at the sides, which when opened, reveals the reverse side of the painting.

This side of the painting shows a blank spread of canvas, yellowed with age, but the eye slits and the lamp are cut out and colored gelatine covers these small openings.

By throwing the light from a flashlight over these openings in the painting from this side of the library wall, the effects already mentioned are produced.

There is a secret door in wall Right and under which there lies an old mattress with a dirty sheet spread over it.

This door is also used for several exits, but behind it there is a slide through which OSWALD *bursts.*

Over Left there is a long wooden-chest and up Right Center stands a soap box on which there is an old-fashioned oil lamp, writing materials, a small rock and some string. The lamp is turned down low at the rise of the curtain. A heavy blanket may be used instead of the chest.

An amber baby spot in the front border covers this lamp, thereby lighting up the panel Center dimly. The footlights are on but are down quite low.

The stage must be quite dark so that the TIGER *is not recognized.*

The action starts from the time in the second act when MACINTOSH *is drawn through the fireplace.*

The stooped figure of a man is discovered, standing up Center with an ear at the panel, listening intently.

He wears a black slouch hat, pulled well down over his eyes. A dark colored bandana covers the lower part of his face. He has on a long black coat. On his hands he wears a pair of gloves that are made to resemble a Tiger's claw with long sharp talons. These come almost to his elbows and are drawn on over his coat sleeves.

There is a pause after the curtain rises to register the suspense, and then MACINTOSH'S *voice is heard through the wall—muffled by distance.*

MAC. Who *are* you? *(The* TIGER *pushes a button above the panel. It slides noiselessly upward, revealing* MACINTOSH *standing as in Act Two with drawn revolver. A dim glow of light from the library shows his figure quite plainly as the* TIGER *is standing a trifle to the Right of opening.* MACINTOSH *is facing Left and with his back slightly towards the audience. The* TIGER *reaches through opening with both hands slowly, with fingers opening and closing, showing the talons plainly.)* Answer—or I'll shoot! *(As in Act Two, the* TIGER'S *claws grip* MACINTOSH'S *throat. He puts up a hearty battle, but cannot do more than gurgle, for the talons are biting into his flesh. Slowly he is drawn into the room and the panel closes behind him . . . The idea is that the panel works by clock-work and only stays up a certain length of time after which it closes automatically.* MACINTOSH *drops his revolver Center . . . The* TIGER *unloosens one hand and gives* MACINTOSH *an uppercut that throws him down Left. As he falls and rolls on his face, not wholly unconscious,* THOMPSON *enters the room by sliding through secret doors Right which close after him. He has a green pocket flash in his hand which is lighted and he lands on the mattress. The* TIGER *whirls, facing him, but upon recognizing* THOMPSON, *he points to* MACINTOSH'S *prostrate form and starts removing the* TIGER

gloves from his hands . . . THOMPSON *goes to* MACINTOSH *and rolls him over on his back with his foot . . . Grunts as he covers* MACINTOSH *with the flashlight.)*

THOMPSON. You got him good, eh, Boss? *(Snaps off light.)*

TIGER *(In a hoarse whisper.)* It worked great! *(Goes Right Center.)*

THOMPSON. Kind of scared me, though. I thought you would never drag him through. And me, standing by them French windows, with that green flashlight on my face, just waitin' for him to jump out and clout me once. Knocked him cold, eh?

TIGER. Tie him.

THOMPSON. With what?

TIGER. This. *(Kicks at a length of rope which is on the floor by panel Lower Center.)* Hurry!

THOMPSON *(Starts to tie* MACINTOSH'S *feet.)* I wish you'd hurry and find that necklace. I want to get out o' here. They're gettin' wise.

TIGER. Pipe down! *(Starts to Right panel.)*

THOMPSON *(Rises, having finished tying* MACINTOSH'S *arms behind him.)* Are you goin'?

TIGER. I've got to get back. *(Continues to talk in stage whisper.)* Know what to do now?

THOMPSON. Wait. I'll see. I've got it all down here. *(Takes a slip of paper from pocket . . . consults it with the aid of the oil lamp's feeble glow.)* Let's see. Oh, sure. After showing green face at window comes the note to the skirt.

TIGER. Good. Things will soon reach a climax.

THOMPSON. Gosh, yes. It can't be long now.

TIGER. I'll see you later—and be quiet! *(Exit* TIGER *through doors Right after pushing the button which controls them . . .* THOMPSON *goes up to soap box . . . gets cup of water from an old pail which sets beside it . . . comes down and dashes the water in* MACINTOSH'S *face . . .* MACINTOSH *groans and turns over . . .* THOMPSON *brings box down beside* MACINTOSH *and yanks him to a sitting posture*

*—shakes him—*MACINTOSH *shakes head and opens eyes—looks around—dazed.)*

THOMPSON. Comin' to, eh?

MAC. How did I get in here? *(Looks at* THOMPSON.*)* Who are you? *(Recognizes him.)* Oh, you're the tiger's keeper from the circus.

THOMPSON *(Laughs gruffly.)* You nuts sure fell for my line. I've never seen a circus. *(Crosses Right.)*

MAC. It felt like claws around my throat. Was that you?

THOMPSON. Naw!

MAC. But where *are* we?

THOMPSON. In a secret room back of the fireplace.

MAC. So you're one of the gang?

THOMPSON. Aw, shut up your gab! *(He has crossed Right after* MACINTOSH *comes to.)* We got work to do. We want to get away before morning and there's no time to lose. Now, listen. If you act sensible and do what I want you to, you'll be O. K. But if you *don't,* we'll . . .

MAC. Murder me?

THOMPSON. Maybe. So there's no use bein' obstinate now. Be good and I'll let you alone.

MAC. What do you want?

THOMPSON. Not much. You just write a little note . . .

MAC. To whom?

THOMPSON. That's none o' your business!

MAC. What do you want me to say? *(Playing for time.)*

THOMPSON. Will you write it?

MAC. What do you think I am?

THOMPSON. No more gaff! You write that note or I'll blow your brains out. *(Flourishes his revolver.)*

MAC. You won't shoot that gun.

THOMPSON. What makes you think I won't?

MAC. Because the report would disclose this hiding place.

THOMPSON. Smart boy, eh? Well, you're right about that. I won't shoot. But what's to keep me from gaggin' you and puttin' you in that box—and lockin' it? *(Points to chest Left.)* Who'd ever find you there?

MAC. You wouldn't do that!

THOMPSON *(With a triumphant grin.)* Well, are you going to write that note?

MAC. You've got me cornered. I'll *have* to, I guess.

THOMPSON. You're a wise guy.

MAC. After I write it—what then?

THOMPSON. You'll be turned loose in the morning.

MAC. Turn me loose now, and I'll do it.

THOMPSON. Oh no, I don't! I'll loosen just one hand. Can't get me that way, old-timer. No tricks now. *(He loosens* MACINTOSH'S *Right hand only . . .* MACINTOSH *grabs him by the throat . . . he hits* MACINTOSH'S *wrist with his revolver . . .* MACINTOSH *groans and his hand falls limply to the floor.)* You will, eh? Write that note pretty quick or by God, I'll leave you here to starve to death!

MAC. Give me the pen.

THOMPSON. It's a pencil. *(Hands it to* MACINTOSH *who leans Right elbow on box for support.)* Now write this. *(Dictates from his reference slip—reads.)* "Will not be back tonight. Am O. K. Don't worry. Mac."

MAC. No—I—I—won't . . .

THOMPSON. You won't? *(Raises revolver as if to hit him with the butt end.)*

MAC. All right. Guess I'll have to. *(Writes . . .* THOMPSON *looking over his shoulder at first, but as he continues writing,* THOMPSON *goes back Right of box and* MACINTOSH *glances at him . . . sees that he is not looking and hurriedly adds something to the bottom of the sheet.* THOMPSON *turns, snatches note from him, reads it—gagging* MACINTOSH *at the same time.)*

THOMPSON. Oh? *(Reading.)* You want help, eh? I'll help you! *(Tears off lower part of note and wraps the remainder about stone and ties it with string . . . While* THOMPSON *is doing this,* MACINTOSH *slowly pokes his Right hand back into ropes so that when* THOMPSON *looks back at him, he will see that* MACINTOSH *is tied and forgets that he has not tied his hand again after he wrote the note.)* Now, I gotta beat it. I'll chuck this in the window to your sweet little girl friend so she won't worry about her

cute little wouldbe detective. Bye, bye. Enjoy yourself. *(He pushes button on wall Right. The doors open and he exits and doors close after him.* MACINTOSH *makes a note of the location of the button . . . There is a pause, and then* MACINTOSH *slowly draws his Right hand from ropes and holds it out from body, muttering after* THOMPSON—*)*

MAC. The Sap! *(This should be good for a hand . . .* MACINTOSH *quickly takes ropes from about his body . . . Rises and stretches . . . Takes off gag . . . After chafing and rubbing himself, he looks about and goes up to panel Center. He is searching for the button which operates the panel when a groan is heard coming from the chest. He is startled and turns . . . staring at the chest a second. The groan is repeated. He sees the revolver which he has dropped on the floor at the beginning of the act . . . secures it and cautiously goes to chest . . . throws back the lid . . . looks inside and steps back with a muttered gasp. He then helps the* MYSTERY WOMAN *out of the box. She has blood on her temple and scratches one arm while he closes the box lid, then helps her to sit on it.)* Who *are* you, and *what* are you doing *here?*

WOMAN *(Tries several times to talk, then mutters.)* I—I don't know.

MAC. How did you get here?

WOMAN. I—I don't know that either. The last thing I remember I was being dragged through that bookcase.

MAC. What bookcase?

WOMAN. In the library of Mystery Manor.

MAC. We are still in Mystery Manor.

WOMAN *(With gaining strength.)* We are?

MAC. Yes. And you—you must be the Mystery Woman that Erma spoke about?

WOMAN. Erma Lowrie?

MAC. Yes. She fainted when you disappeared.

WOMAN. The lights went out—the bookcase opened—and I was lifted off the couch—by—by—Oh! *(Buries her head in hands . . . weeping.)*

MAC. By something that resembled Tiger's Claws?

WOMAN. Oh, yes. You know Erma Lowrie?

MAC. We are engaged.

WOMAN. Then I can tell you. It is she I came to warn. For her, my life has been in danger.

MAC. You came to warn her—of what?

WOMAN. Terrible danger!

MAC. Why, what danger could come to her? She has no enemies.

WOMAN. Danger—the like of which you have no idea. From one who would kill and kill again, in order to accomplish his evil designs. Oh, you *must* get her out of this house at any cost.

MAC. You think that someone would actually make an attempt upon her life? *(Finds her story hard to believe.)*

WOMAN. Not hers alone, but anyone who would keep him from getting the Tiger's necklace.

MAC. So *that* is what he's after?

WOMAN. He's a fiend in human form. He's all the more dangerous because no one suspects him—no one knows—what he hides beneath that cool exterior. I am the only one who knows. I am here to deliver him into the hands of justice.

MAC. How am I to know that you're not a party to this scheme?

WOMAN. I don't blame you for saying that. But you *must* believe me. You simply *must! (She speaks quickly and earnestly.)*

MAC. Who is this man?

WOMAN *(Hangs her head.)* He is—my husband!

MAC. Is he in the house now? Do we know him?

WOMAN. I don't know. But he has made two attempts on my life tonight.

MAC. Are you sure of it?

WOMAN. I know. He has threatened me on several occasions. I might have known that someday he would try to make those threats good.

MAC. How did you know of his plans to get the necklace?

WOMAN. I heard him plotting the whole thing with a crook friend of his. He discovered me listening, and told me that if I ever breathed a word, he'd kill me.

MAC. If what you say is true, we mustn't waste any more time talking. We must find a way out of here.

WOMAN. We must be quick! Oh, I hope we're in time. *(He starts to help her off the chest, but she waves him away.)* Don't bother about me, please. I'm all right. Just find a way out.

MAC. You're a plucky woman. *(Starts up Center, pauses and comes back.)* What's this man's name?

WOMAN *(Hesitates a second.)* Why, his name is . . . *(There is a slight noise behind panel Right. He puts fingers to lips.)*

MAC. Shhh! *(He motions her to get out of sight . . . She nods and goes up Left. . . . Crouches in corner . . .* MACINTOSH *quickly gets bandana handkerchief and rope with which he was tied and crouches against wall below secret doors Right. After a slight pause,* THOMPSON *enters and goes directly to panel Center. Presses a button over panel, and the wooden panel which covers painting swings back, revealing the oposite side of the painting to audience. Panel Right closes after* THOMPSON *enters. He turns the flashlight on the painting and swings it across the picture several times.* ERMA *is heard to mutter, "Oh,* ARTHUR, *look!" from the opposite side of wall. He hurriedly closes panels and starts to back down Center when* MACINTOSH *springs upon him.* MACINTOSH *gags him before he has a chance to cry out. They struggle and* MACINTOSH *knocks him over on chest where he succeeds in tying him. The* WOMAN *comes down to his side.)*

WOMAN. Have you got him tied securely?

MAC. Yes. One is out of the running. Open the chest. *(She does so, and* MACINTOSH *lifts* THOMPSON *into it and closes the lid.)* It was more luck than brains that time. Do you recognize him?

WOMAN. Yes. He's the crook that was working with my husband. Hurry. He may come at any moment. *(Goes to fireplace—starts searching for button.* MACINTOSH *stops her.)*

MAC. Wait! I've got a better idea. Let's try *this* way out and perhaps we may surprise him. *(Searches panel Right for button.)*

WOMAN. A good idea.

MAC. I can't seem to find a button.

WOMAN. Perhaps—

MAC. Here it is, I think. *(Presses button and doors open.)* Come on.

WOMAN. I wonder where it leads to?

MAC *(Picks up* THOMPSON'S *flashlight from floor where it was dropped during the struggle, and looks into passage way.)* It seems to be a polished incline. But I think we can walk up the slope if we're careful. The woman who built this house was a fake medium, and I suppose these secret rooms and passages were built for her spirit manifestations. Clever idea—that picture with the cut-out eyes.

WOMAN. Please hurry! *(He puts out lamp—blackout—takes the* WOMAN'S *hand and they exit Right, panel closing behind them . . .* MACINTOSH *using his flashlight . . . There is a pause and* ERMA'S *voice is heard coming from back of the wall Center.)*

ERMA. Oh! *(As the panel Center opens, the stage is in complete darkness but back of the opening Center there is a dim light as in Act Two . . . This shows* ERMA *and* ARTHUR *peering into the secret room.)*

ARTHUR. It's true!

ERMA. Oh, how creepy!

ARTHUR. Are we going in?

ERMA *(Hesitates.)* Suppose—someone—is in there?

ARTHUR. I'll go first. *(He starts to enter.)*

ERMA. Wait! I'm not afraid, but do you have a revolver?

ARTHUR. Yes. *(Draws it out of his pocket.)*

ERMA. We shouldn't take chances. You must remember I've had enough experiences tonight to drive a thrill hunter crazy.

ARTHUR. Well, we'll let it go until morning if you care to.

ERMA. No, we'll go now. Come on. *(She starts in.)*

ARTHUR *(Holds her back.)* No, I'll go first. Give me your hand. *(She does so.)*

ERMA. I wonder if we'll find anything?

ARTHUR. We *will, I know* it. Come! *(He enters and she follows timidly . . . there is a pause and the panel closes with a snap—she screams—stage is in complete darkness.)*

ERMA. It's closed, Art!

ARTHUR. Don't be afraid. I'll strike a light. *(He lights a match—looks about—sees oil lamp—lights it— and lights come up a little.)* Here's a lamp. I hope it will burn. *(Baby spot covers lamps and shows up room dimly.)*

ERMA *(Looks about.)* Why, it's a regular little room.

ARTHUR. Built between the walls. Clever, isn't it?

ERMA. The fireplace must be the only way in, or out.

ARTHUR. Say, this lamp filled with oil proves that someone has been here recently. The chimney is still hot. *(Feels it.)*

ERMA. Let's follow out the instructions in Aunt Sylvia's letter, Art. I want to get out of here as quickly as possible.

ARTHUR. What did that letter say we should do after we got in here?

ERMA. Wait—I'll see. *(Looks at letter which she has kept in her hand.)* "Press exactly the same spot on the other side and see what happens." *(She goes up to panel Center.)* That must be here. *(Starts to press Center approximately on the same spot as trio of roses on mantel of fireplace in the other room . . . There is a wild yell, and* OSWALD, *clad only in pajamas, comes flying into the room through the doors Right. They close behind him. He lands on the mattress . . .* ERMA *screams and* ARTHUR *curses.* OSWALD *sits on the mattress in a ridiculous pose, panting.)*

OSWALD. Oh, my heart—my heart!

ERMA. Oswald!

OSWALD *(Jumps up and backs against wall.)* Let me alone now. I'm dead—I know it! *(Kneels and prays.)* Oh, Lord, I've been such a good boy—*such* a good boy. Let me slide *up* instead of *down.*

ARTHUR *(Goes over and yanks him to his feet . . . shaking him.)* Come out of it.

OSWALD *(Gazes at* ARTHUR *in astonishment and then gingerly touches him with the tips of his fingers.)* Are you *real?*

ARTHUR. Of course, you fool.

ERMA. Arthur! Oh, Oswald, how on earth did you ever get down here?

OSWALD *(Recognizes her.)* Oh, Erma! *(Looks down at his scanty attire.)* Oh, for God's sake, I'm *indecent!* Erma, look the other way. *(As she laughs.) The other way! (She turns and he looks about . . . sees old bed sheet on mattress and grabs it—draping it about himself.)* All right. *(She turns and laughs at his appearance.)* Oh, you can laugh, but it's better than nothing. I don't like this place. It reminds me of the crazy house at Coney.

ARTHUR *(Pointing at* OSWALD'S *ridiculous appearance.)* Behold—Emperor Nero—or *zero!*

OSWALD. Oh, don't try to be funny, Art. Where *are* we, anyway?

ERMA. In a secret room back of the fireplace in the library. We thought there was only one way in . . . until you came so unexpectedly.

OSWALD. My word! What is this? A bootlegger's hangout?

ARTHUR. How did you find *that* entrance? *(Points to Right.)*

OSWALD. I didn't. It found me. I heard something in my room. I had left the light burning. When I awakened it was pitch black. I got up to investigate, but bumped into the wall—something gave way—and—and here I am! I thought I had died and was on my way to Heaven.

ARTHUR. You were going in the wrong direction, weren't you?

ERMA. Oh, Oswald, we've found the hiding place of *Aunt Sylvia's* diamond necklace!

ARTHUR. *Shhh! (Frowns at her, then puts fingers to lips. Then to* OSWALD.*)* Erma means that we have found the way to get in here.

OSWALD. All that interests me is, how am I going to get out of here?

ARTHUR. Easy, son. Here—*(He hunts a second for the button—presses it—and the panel Center flies up.)*

OSWALD *(Jumps.)* Oh! Why, it's just like a fairy tale, isn't it? What an adventure!

ARTHUR. Now you can go right back to your bugs, Oswald. Nobody is stopping you.

OSWALD *(Coming Center.)* Goodness, but I'll be glad to get out of this awful house. Where does this lead to?

ERMA. The library.

OSWALD. I hope Aunt Sophia doesn't see me running around the halls in this sheet or she'll think we have ghosts here.

ERMA. Go back to bed, Oswald!

OSWALD. I *am* going back to bed. But from now on, I'll sleep with *all* my lights on, believe me. *(Starts to exit Center, the sheet trips him and he falls out.* ARTHUR *and* ERMA *laugh, but the panel closes as* OSWALD *ad libs his exit.)*

ARTHUR. Well, now that the pest is gone, let us try to find that necklace, Erma.

ERMA. Remember, Art, we have Oswald to thank for showing us that there is another entrance to this room. The house must be literally honey-combed with secret rooms and passages. Let's see now—*(Refers to letter again.)* "Exactly the same spot as the other side." *(Presses in Center of panel above the opening, but under the picture.)* We'll try—here! *(Panel swings open, showing painting.)*

ARTHUR *(Gasps.)* The painting!

ERMA *(Both together.)* Oh, Art! The eyes and the lamp are cut right out of the canvas! *(*ARTHUR *follows her up Center and they examine it more closely.)*

ARTHUR. And they're covered with bits of colored gelatine.

ERMA. And when this panel swings open, and someone flashes a light across it . . .

ARTHUR. The eyes and the lamp on the other side light up.

ERMA. Exactly. Another one of Aunt Sylvia's "Spook Manifestations."

ARTHUR *(Feeling about lower edge of picture.)* But I don't see any more instructions.

ERMA *(Points to soap box.)* Give me that box, Art, and hold the lamp, please.

ARTHUR. Surely. *(Places box directly under picture and helps her to mount it . . . Holds lamp up . . . she feels around edge of painting.)* Find anything at all?

ERMA. Not a thing so far.

ARTHUR *(Showing by his voice that he is tremendously interested.)* I wonder if someone *has* beaten us to it?

ERMA. I don't think so. *(Looks closely at picture.)* Hold the lamp closer, Art. *(He does so.)* Ahhh!

ARTHUR. What *is* it? *(Anxiously.)*

ERMA. There is something written on the canvas. I can hardly read it. It's so faded.

ARTHUR. Yes—yes?

ERMA. Listen. *(With considerable difficulty making out the words.)* "Look in crystal." That is all.

ARTHUR. You're sure?

ERMA. Yes. I wonder what that means?

ARTHUR. Nothing more? Look closely.

ERMA. Not a thing. *(Sighs and gets down from box. Places it Left Center.)*

ARTHUR *(Pondering.)* "Look in crystal"—I wonder— *(Goes Left Center and sets lamp on box.)*

ERMA *(Suddenly.)* I've got it!

ARTHUR. You mean—

ERMA *(Excitedly.)* The secret! Why didn't we think of it before?

ARTHUR. Erma, what *is* it?

ERMA. "Look in crystal." Don't you see?

ARTHUR. See *what?*

ERMA. Why have I always been attracted to that crystal? Why has it always seemed to glow with a fire of its own? Why, Art, the jewels are *there!*

ARTHUR. You—you—think—

ERMA *(She is terribly excited and breathes heavily.)* Of course. What a hiding place! Who would think to look *there?* Why, Art, we've been looking at the collar every hour of every day that Aunt Sophia and I have been in this house.

ARTHUR. *Where is it?*

ERMA. It is right where it has been from the day that Aunt Sylvia hid it. Under the crystal globe in the library. In plain sight for anyone to see who wanted to.

ARTHUR. I believe you're right! *(He is swept away with the cleverness of the idea.)*

ERMA. Get it, Art, get it. *(He starts up to panel—she paces back and forth across the stage . . . thoroughly wrought up.)* Aunt Sylvia was sly. She had to be.

ARTHUR. I'll get the crystal.

ERMA. Yes, yes. Hurry—hurry!

ARTHUR. I'm almost as excited as you are. *(He shows it as he is breathing spasmodically and his fingers open and close, as the panel flies up. He starts, and exits Center Left. Calls from within.)* I'll be right back.

ERMA *(After a pause.)* How are you coming, Art?

ARTHUR *(Off up Left.)* I can't get it out of its socket in the pedestal.

ERMA. Don't break it! *(She crosses to the opening, stands with her back to the audience.* YAMI *enters through the sliding panel.)*

YAMI *(Quietly commanding.)* Mem Sahib, tell me where the jewels are. *(*ERMA *backs down stage,* YAMI *follows her.)* Have no fear. You are safe with Yami. I shall soon be on my way back to my people with the necklace which is rightfully their property.

ERMA *(Her face drawn, trying to break the hypnotic spell.)* Your eyes . . . no, no, I won't tell you!

YAMI *(Making a few passes in the air before her face.)* Your will is *mine,* Mem Sahib. *Mine! I am high priest of the Tiger Cult!* You . . . will . . . *obey!*

ERMA. Yes . . . yes . . . the crystal . . . ! *(Starts backing down Right.)*

YAMI *(Following her slowly.) This* time you will *remember,* Mem Sahib. Remember that Yami, on pain of death, cannot return to his *tribe* without the necklace. Yami has grown to love you, Mem Sahib, and would not have you believe that the blood of your Aunt is on his hands.

How she died, I do not *know*. She was a thief, and *more*. She *deserved* to die.

ERMA *(Parrot-like, repeating it.)* She . . . deserved . . . to . . . *die!*

YAMI. I only take what is rightfully mine. *(*ARTHUR *enters passage, takes in the situation at a glance and sneaks down behind* YAMI. *He carries the crystal box.) The jewels,* Mem Sahib. Remove them from their hiding place. *Quickly,* before your cousin returns.

ERMA *(Barely breathing it, points upstage.)* Yes, the *jewels* are in . . .

ARTHUR *(Leveling his revolver at* YAMI.*)* Put 'em up! *(*YAMI *whirls.)* Put your hands up . . . quick! *(*YAMI *makes a lightning pass at him.* ARTHUR *quickly strikes him over the head with the gun. He falls Center and groans.)*

ERMA *(Gives a violent start, backs down Right and screams.)* Arthur!

ARTHUR. So he was the guilty one after all. Well, Erma, I've got it loose. *(Begins to fumble with the crystal box.)* I can't seem to get this box open.

ERMA. Bring it here . . . quickly! I'll help you. *(She holds box firmly while he fumbles with it. Suddenly the bottom opens, and the collar of diamonds falls to the floor . . . The baby spot in border must be trained directly on the crystal, so that it catches the stones. As the collar falls, it looks like a flash of liquid fire.) Oh, Art!*

ARTHUR *(Is stunned by the beauty of the jewels.)* Beautiful! *(There is a pause—to register the effect. Then* ARTHUR *with a sob gets down on his knees to grab the necklace. But she forestalls him and rises with the collar glittering in her hand.)* Look at it, Erma! Magnificent!

ERMA *(Half whispers.)* A king's ransom!

ARTHUR *(He is breathing heavily.)* Erma—Erma—what will you do with it?

ERMA *(Shakes her head as if the jewels had dazed her.)* Do? Return it to the rightful owners, of course.

ARTHUR *(Has risen from his knees when she took the*

collar.) Return that gorgeous thing? Oh, no, *no!* You *can't!*

ERMA *(Surprised.)* Why, Arthur!

ARTHUR. Let me see it—hold it in my hands . . . *(His eyes are glittering and his mouth twitches.)*

ERMA *(Rather frightened at his sudden change of tone.)* Arthur, please.

ARTHUR. Let me have it—*fool! (His hands clench.)*

ERMA. Arthur! For God's sake, what is wrong with you?

ARTHUR. Jewels—diamonds! I *must* have them! *(He draws nearer to her . . . hands outstretched.)*

ERMA *(Now thoroughly frightened, backs away Right. He slowly follows her.)* What has come over you?

ARTHUR. Give it to me!

ERMA. *No!*

ARTHUR. *Yes!* After all my scheming and planning—after all I've suffered—you won't give it to me. *(His voice raises to a screech on the last line but he now turns pleading and with cunning.)* Come, Erma, give Arthur the jewels. Arthur won't hurt you.

ERMA. Arthur, you've gone mad!

ARTHUR. Gone—Gone? *(Laughs hysterically.)* I've *been* mad, from the cradle—jewel mad. I've set my mind on these beauties, and I'm going to have them! *(Reaches for her . . . She screams and ducks under his arm . . . Runs Right. He catches her and is slowly choking her when* MACINTOSH, *the* MYSTERY WOMAN *and* MRS. MURDOCK *rush in from Center.* MRS. MURDOCK *carries candle. Lights up a little.* MACINTOSH *sees the situation at a glance and rushes at* ARTHUR. ARTHUR *dorps* ERMA *and clinches with* MACINTOSH. *They struggle and* MACINTOSH *overpowers* ARTHUR, *bearing him to the floor, where he kneels panting like a caged animal.)* Let me go! Only let me have the jewels! The jewels! *(Starts sobbing, and is hysterical.)*

MAC *(To* ERMA . . . *The* MYSTERY WOMAN *has picked her from the floor and they are now downstage Center.)* You are safe, Erma?

ERMA. Yes. Thank God, you came in when you did. He's mad.

WOMAN. Yes—jewel mad.

ERMA. You are the woman who . . .

WOMAN. Who tried to warn you about him, Miss Lowrie. *(Points to* ARTHUR.*)* I am Arthur's wife.

ERMA. His wife?

WOMAN. Yes. From boyhood he has been mad over jewels. He's rational on every other subject, but he'll sell his soul for a precious stone.

ERMA. Arthur—my own cousin!

ARTHUR. *You . . . (Starts for her.* MACINTOSH *holds him.)*

WOMAN. They have found you out, Arthur. I can only thank God that you weren't able to carry out your evil designs on this young woman.

MAC. What shall we do with him, Erma?

ERMA *(Crosses to him.)* I—I don't know. Why, I've known you for years, Arthur. Why should you want to harm me?

ARTHUR. Oh, shut up—all of you! I didn't want to harm you, but something here— *(Puts hand to head.)* —turns me into a beast at the mere mention of jewels. They drive me frantic. I killed your Aunt Sylvia. She refused to tell me where the jewels were hidden. I hired Thompson to give you that Tiger scare. I am the Tiger! I knew about the secret panel, and rooms, and how Aunt Sylvia worked her spook scares. I only wanted to frighten you away . . . . I was crazy, I guess.

MAC. It was *you* who dragged me through the firelace?

ARTHUR. Yes, because I hated you.

ERMA. Why?

ARTHUR. Because he loved you. I could have killed him. I wish I had. *(Turns to* MACINTOSH.*)* I knocked you unconscious . . . then ran up to my room, put on my lounging robe and came back to the library for a book. A book. *(Laughs insanely and suddenly turns to the* WOMAN.*)* You'll pay for this! *(Works himself up into a frenzy.)* I'll show you! Let me go! *(He breaks away and*

grabs the WOMAN *by throat—bends her back slowly—absolutely insane.)*

ERMA. Mac!

ARTHUR. Now double cross me, will you—*will you? (*MACINTOSH *knocks him on head with butt end of revolver—he wilts to floor—*ERMA *screams as the* WOMAN *falls into her arms.)*

ERMA *(*YAMI *groans and stirs slightly.)* Yami! He's coming to!

MAC. What's *he* got to do with them?

ERMA. He is the High Priest of the *Tiger Cult.* They sent him here to get the *necklace.* He came in when Arthur went for the necklace. He *hypnotized* me. Then Arthur came in and . . .

MAC *(To* YAMI, *helping him to his feet.)* Come on, get up. You'll go along with the others.

ERMA. No, Mac. *(*MACINTOSH *turns to her questioningly.)* Let him go.

MAC. Let him *go?*

ERMA *(Nods.)* Yes. Let him go with . . . *this. (Holds out the necklace to* YAMI.*)*

YAMI *(Breathlessly.) Mem Sahib!*

ERMA *(Smiles.)* They *belong* to you, Yami. *You* and your *tribe.*

YAMI *(Softly.)* Mem Sahib, my tribe will never *see* Yami *again.* Here . . . *(Holds out the necklace.)* I *give* it to you!

ERMA *(Gasps.)* You—give it—to me?

YAMI *(Smiles.)* For a—*wedding* present.

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*) Mac! (He smiles and embraces her. . . .* YAMI *goes Left.)*

YAMI *(Turning at the sliding panel.)* Yami has learned of *new* ways and . . . and a new *God* from *you,* Mem Sahib. The Tiger Cult is a religion of *blood* and *savagery.* I have tried to be true to my trust but . . . the fruits of victory have turned me to loath it all. *(Slowly.)* I will never go back to my people. *(Bows and exits down Left.)*

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Mac, the jewels are *mine!*

MAC *(Turns to* MRS. MURDOCK.*)* Go, telephone for the

police, Mrs. Murdock, and tell them we'll have two prisoners for them.

MRS. MURDOCK. Two, sir?

MAC. Yes. *(Points to* ARTHUR.*)* Arthur, and one in *there. (Nods to chest.)*

MRS. MURDOCK. Yes, sir. Right away. *(*MRS. MURDOCK *exits Center to Right.)*

MAC *(Turns to* ERMA.*)* Is *she* all right? *(Referring to* WOMAN *who is in* ERMA'S *arms.)*

ERMA. I think so—yes. *(Pats the* WOMAN *on shoulder.)* There, there, dear. You shall have a home here with me as long as you like.

MAC. Well, Erma, this clears up the mystery, I guess.

SOPHIA *(Off Center outside fireplace panel.)* Whoopee! Erma, Erma, I'm so happy. . . . *(Enters through fireplace panel. She has on a bright-colored kimona and her hair is done up in curl papers.)*

ERMA. Auntie, what is it?

SOPHIA. I've found my teeth! I've found my teeth . . . *(Stumbles as she crosses to* ERMA, *claps her hands to her mouth and wails.)* Oh, there they go! They're gone *again!*

QUICK CURTAIN

* * *

(If one setting is desired for the three acts, use the third act which begins on the next page.)

ACT THREE

(The setting is the same as the previous two acts . . . The panel in the fireplace is closed as the curtain rises. . . . At once ERMA *screams and her voice is heard through the wall.)*

ERMA *(From off up Left Center.)* Arthur, it's Mac!

ARTHUR *(Also off Left Center.)* Good Lord!

ERMA *(Still off.)* Open that door, quick!

ARTHUR *(Still off.)* I'll carry him into the living room. *(The panel opens.)*

ERMA *(Enters, backing through the opening.)* He's been wounded!

ARTHUR *(Enters through the opening, carrying the limp form of* MACINTOSH.*)* Now how did he get in *there? (*ERMA *crosses to the arm chair Center.* ARTHUR *drags* MACINTOSH *over Center and deposits him in the chair . . .* MACINTOSH *is moaning feebly.)*

ERMA *(Anxiously, kneeling beside the chair.)* Mac, dear, what happened? *(To* ARTHUR.*)* Oh, he may be seriously hurt.

ARTHUR *(Standing on the Left side of the chair.)* You see, I was right. He *must* be the one.

ERMA. Don't be silly, Arthur. I know he isn't. You see, we are engaged.

ARTHUR *(Tremendously surprised.)* Engaged?

ERMA. Yes, we didn't want anyone to know it. I knew him when I was working in the store. He's a detective.

ARTHUR. A what?

ERMA *(Wiping the blood from* MACINTOSH'S *temple with her handkerchief.)* A detective. I wired him to come out here in disguise. I thought he might be able to discover just what was wrong with the house. *(Tenderly, to* MACINTOSH.*)* Mac, dear, speak to me.

MAC *(Groans, moves and sits up.)* Oh, what a rap! I wonder who hit me! *(Suddenly notices* ERMA.*)* Erma!

ERMA. Mac, what happened? I thought you went out through the windows.

MAC *(Slowly shakes his head and passes a hand across his temple.)* No, I . . . I remember they started to open, I pulled my gun and—and then someone grabbed me around the throat and dragged me through the fireplace. I couldn't see who it was in the dark, but he had a punch like a battering ram. I went out cold, I guess. How did you find me?

ERMA *(Rises.)* I just found an old letter from Aunt Sylvia telling me about the secret room. Arthur and I decided to go in and—

ARTHUR *(Laughs slightly, to* MACINTOSH.*)* And it's a lucky thing for *you* we *did*, isn't it?

MAC *(Grins.)* I'll say.

ERMA *(Enthusiastically.)* And, oh, Mac, we've discovered where the necklace is hidden.

MAC *(Rises quickly.)* You *have?*

ARTHUR *(Hastily.)* Well, not exactly *where* it is hidden —as yet.

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* But in Aunt Sylvia's letter there are directions telling *how* to find it.

MAC. Gee, that's splendid, isn't it?

ERMA *(Shows him the letter.)* See here. *(Points to the place in the letter.)* We're supposed to go into the secret room and then press a button which corresponds to the button on *this* side. It controls the opening of the hidden *door.*

MAC. I'd be careful about going in there again, if I were you. Look, what happened to *me.*

ARTHUR. I've got a gun. *(Produces it.)*

MAC. I had one, too, but it didn't do me any good. *(To* ERMA.*)* Erma, whoever has been responsible for these strange happenings uses that secret room as a hiding place.

ARTHUR. There was no one in there but you when *we* went in.

MAC. But they're likely to be back at any moment. This is getting *serious.* Whoever it is won't stop *now* at *murder.*

ERMA. They *must* be after the collar.

MAC. Of course, they are. The question is how are we going to *trap* them?

ARTHUR. It seems to me that the best thing to do is to forestall them and get the collar ourselves.

ERMA *(Breathlessly.)* Oh, *yes.*

MAC. But how? Frankly, I wouldn't like to go back into that room without knowing what I'm dealing with. *(Shudders.)* Boy, it was gruesome. The things that fastened themselves about my neck felt like the talons of an animal.

ARTHUR. Say, I've got an idea.

ERMA. Yes?

ARTHUR *(Excitedly.)* Listen, the only way to catch this unseen person is to get him red-handed, don't you think?

MAC. We know that.

ARTHUR *(Warming up to his idea.)* Well, if Erma isn't afraid, I've got a plan. Why not let her go in there—alone?

ERMA *(Draws back with a slight gasp.)* Oh, Arthur!

ARTHUR *(Indicating* MACINTOSH.*)* We'll stand outside, just out of sight, and Erma will leave the door open. You can locate the collar and *maybe* our criminal friend will try to *stop* you. When we hear you scream we'll rush in and catch him.

ERMA *(Fearfully.)* You suggest that I go in there—alone, and . . .

MAC *(Stoutly.)* Over my dead body she will!

ARTHUR. She won't be in any danger. She's the one they have been trying to frighten away. She is the most important pawn in the entire *game,* because she's the heiress. By using her as a sort of decoy . . .

ERMA. Arthur, I believe you're right.

MAC *(In surprise.)* Erma, you mean that you're willing to go in there?

ERMA *(Nods quickly.)* I'm willing to do *anything* to clear up the mystery. As Arthur says, you two can stand outside. I'll be in no danger . . . that is, no *serious* danger. At the first sign of someone in the room I'll let out a yell that will rouse the whole neighborhood.

ARTHUR. And we'll rush in before any harm can come to you.

MAC. The solution of the whole mystery seems to be in that room. *(To* ERMA.*)* It might work . . .

ERMA. It will, I feel it. Let's do it right away, before I lose my courage. *(Starts up Left Center.)*

ARTHUR. The sooner the better. *(He goes up to the Left of fireplace.)*

ERMA *(Turns, facing them, as an idea strikes her . . .* MACINTOSH *follows them up and stands to the Right of the fireplace.)* Wait a minute, I've just thought of something. *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Mac, while you were in there someone threw a note in here through the window. It was signed with your name.

MAC. How could *I* write you a note when I was bound and gagged? And, unconscious, too.

ERMA. That's what I've been wondering about. It said not to worry, that you wouldn't be back tonight.

MAC. If it hadn't been for you two, I probably *wouldn't* be here.

ERMA *(Nervously.)* They must have planned to do away with you! Oh, Mac. *(Goes closer to him.)*

ARTHUR. But he's all right now, Erma, so don't worry. Don't you think we'd better go ahead before anyone comes into the room?

ERMA *(Trying her best to be brave.)* Yes, I—I suppose so. Push the button, Art. *(*ARTHUR *starts to push the button. There is a wild yell off Right. They all whirl, facing the bookcase. It suddenly swings violently open and* OSWALD *falls into the room, almost obscured by a cloud of insects, a huge bat, etc. He falls to the floor.* ERMA *screams.)*

ARTHUR. Oswald! *(He and* MACINTOSH *rush over Right.)*

OSWALD. Let me alone now, I'm dead—I know it! *(Kneels and prays.)* Oh, Lord, I've been such a good boy—*such* a good boy. Let me slide *up* instead of *down.*

ARTHUR *(Goes over and yanks him to his feet . . . shaking him.)* Come out of it.

OSWALD *(Gazes at* ARTHUR *in astonishment and then gingerly touches him with the tips of his fingers.)* Are you *real?*

ARTHUR. Of course, you fool.

OSWALD *(Scrambles to his feet and starts wildly chasing his specimens. He is dressed only in his pajamas and makes*

a ludicrous picture.) Oh, my specimens, my specimens!

ERMA *(Gasping and pointing to the bookcase.)* Look—the *bookcase!*

MAC *(Crossing quickly Right and peering through the opening.) Another* secret entrance!

OSWALD *(Standing helplessly Right Center almost crying.)* Oh, they're gone, all gone—my entire collection!

ERMA *(Crossing to* OSWALD.*)* Oswald, how did you find *that* way in here?

OSWALD *(For the first time notices* ERMA.*)* Erma. *(Looks down at his scanty attire.)* Oh, for heavens sake, I'm *indecent!* Look the other way. *(*ERMA *giggles.)* The other *way! (She does so . . . He quickly secures the throw from the chair and drapes it about his body . . .* ARTHUR *and* MACINTOSH *are examining the opening back of the bookcase Right.)* Oh, you can laugh, but it's better than *nothing.* Erma, I don't *like* this place. It reminds me of the crazy house at Coney Island. *(Wails.)* Look what's happened to my specimens!

MAC *(To* ARTHUR.*)* We'll have to investigate that opening later on. *(Swings the bookcase closed.)*

ARTHUR *(Crossing to* OSWALD.*)* Oswald, how did you find that secret tunnel?

OSWALD. I didn't, it found *me.*

MAC. What are you talking about?

OSWALD. Well, I heard something in my room, a buzzing noise. It awakened me, and it was my horror to find that I had left my case open and the room was *full* of my *specimens,* all flying about. I tried to catch some of them but I bumped into the wall. Something gave way and—and here I *am!* I thought I had died and was on my way to heaven!

ARTHUR *(Laughs.)* You were going in the wrong direction, weren't you?

OSWALD. This is the spookiest house I ever *saw.* I shall leave first thing in the morning. *(Crosses Left.)*

ERMA. Where are you going now?

OSWALD. Back to my room. Maybe I can salvage some of my specimens. The room was *full* of them the last time I *saw* it. I'm going to find that secret opening and *barri-*

cade it. Erma, your old ghosts can scare *me* but when they start getting gay with my *specimens* I'm going to do something *desperate! (Exits Left closing the door behind him.)*

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* I'll bet that's the way the mystery woman disappeared!

MAC. Through the bookcase panel?

ERMA *(Nods.)* Yes, she was sitting there just before the lights went out.

MAC. As soon as you locate the collar we'll investigate that passageway.

ERMA. All right.

ARTHUR *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Maybe you'd better guard that opening while Erma is in the secret room.

MAC. That's a good idea. Why, the house must be *honeycombed* with passages.

ERMA. Shall I go in now? I'm so anxious to see what that necklace looks like. It must be worth a lot of money.

MAC. Yes, let's get it over with. *(*ERMA *starts for the fireplace.)*

OSWALD *(Off Left screams.) Help! Help! (They whirl, facing the doors Left.)*

ERMA. Oswald again! *(He is heard running madly down the hall.)*

ARTHUR *(Disgustedly.) Now,* what's happened?

OSWALD *(Opens the door, panting for breath.)* Come upstairs, quick!

MAC. What's the matter now?

OSWALD *(Talking excitedly, nodding towards the doors Left.)* Aunt Sophia, she's *got* 'em!

ERMA. You mean the *ghost?*

OSWALD *(Gesticulating wildly.)* No, she's gone *crazy! Listen* to her. *(They stand listening for a second.)*

SOPHIA *(Off Left.)* Kitty, kitty, kitty. *Nice* kitty.

ARTHUR. What's she doing?

OSWALD. She's running all around her room. She thinks the *tiger* is there.

MAC. *What!*

SOPHIA *(Off Left.)* Nice kitty. Come to Sophia.

ERMA *(To* ARTHUR.*)* It's that *drink* I gave her!

OSWALD. S-S-Something's got to be *done* about it. She might get *violent.*

ARTHUR *(Crossing Left.)* I'll try to pacify her, Erma. Don't go in until I come back, will you?

OSWALD *(As he and* ARTHUR *exit down Left.)* She's *mad,* I tell you. Stark, staring mad. *(They close the doors behind them.)*

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Perhaps I'd better go up also. *(Starts Left.)*

MAC *(Restraining her.)* No, don't go, Erma. Every minute is precious now.

ERMA. I know, dear, but . . .

MAC. We *must* get that necklace, now that you know where to look for it. If we don't . . .

ERMA. You're right, dear, of course . . .

MAC *(As she starts up for the fireplace.)* I'll stay outside the opening and keep an eye on that bookcase.

ERMA. Yes, do, but don't go too far away. I want you near the opening. *(Pushes the button on the fireplace . . . The panel swings open.)*

MAC *(Stands to the Right of the opening . . . In a hoarse whisper . . . Gives her some matches, or a flashlight.)* Take these.

ERMA. Thanks. It *is* awfully dark in there. *(She strikes a match and gingerly steps through the opening . . . Disappears to the Right.)*

MAC *(Standing Right of fireplace, bending forward so that he can speak through the opening.)* Anyone there?

ERMA *(Off up Left Center.)* No, it's empty, thank goodness. *(The eyes and lamp light up.)*

MAC *(Gasps.)* Ohh!

ERMA *(Still off stage.)* What's the matter?

MAC. The lamp in the painting has lighted up.

ERMA *(With an air of discovery.)* Oh, Mac!

MAC. What?

ERMA *(Still off stage.)* I've found out how the lamp and eyes work!

MAC. How?

ERMA *(Appears in the opening, holding a lighted match.)*

There's a hole right through the wall on the other side of the picture. The eyes and lamp are cut out of the canvas and are covered over with bits of colored gelatin. When anyone strikes a light in the secret room . . .

MAC. The eyes and lamp show up in *here!*

ERMA. Isn't it thrilling?

MAC. And so simple!

ERMA *(Again disappears from sight.)* I can't find anything about the collar.

MAC. Shall I help you?

ERMA *(From off up Left Center.)* Oh, no, you watch that bookcase. There *must* be some more instructions in here. *(The French windows slowly open . . .* THE MYSTERY WOMAN *enters cautiously.)*

MAC *(Calling to* ERMA.*)* Can you see all right?

ERMA *(Her voice growing fainter.)* Yes, thanks. I'll search the whole room. There's no danger, it's absolutely empty.

MYSTERY WOMAN *(Now stands just behind* MACINTOSH, *puts her fingers to her lips.)* Shh!

MAC *(Whirls at the sound and gasps.)* Ohh!

WOMAN *(In a whisper.)* Be silent. There's no time to lose.

MAC. What do you mean?

WOMAN *(Looking fearfully about the room.)* Quiet, please! He may overhear us.

MAC. What are you talking about?

WOMAN. You're the detective, aren't you?

MAC *(Not knowing what to make of her.)* Why, yes, I am.

ERMA *(Off stage.)* Not a sign of anything so far.

WOMAN *(Speaking lowly and quickly to* MACINTOSH.*)* I was here this evening.

MAC. Then you must be the Mystery Woman!

WOMAN *(Nods to davenport Right.)* I was in that chair, something clutched me by the throat and I was lifted through the bookcase. They left me for dead, but I was shamming. I managed to find my way out. *(Nods to the secret room.)* Is Miss Lowrie in there?

MAC *(Nods.)* Yes.

WOMAN. Searching for the—the collar?

MAC. Oh, so you know about that, too, do you?

WOMAN. Yes, it's what he's after.

MAC. He?

WOMAN. The Tiger.

MAC. Do you know him?

WOMAN. Of course. I tried to warn her once before tonight. I heard him plotting the whole thing with a crook friend of his. He discovered me listening and said that if I breathed a word of his plan he—he would kill me.

MAC. Who *is* he?

WOMAN. My husband. *(Looks around fearfully.)* He will strike any minute now. No one suspects him. He thinks he's safe.

ERMA *(Off Left Center with an air of discovery.)* Mac!

MAC *(Leaning forward.)* Yes?

ERMA *(Still off Left Center.)* There's something written here on the canvas.

MAC. What is it?

ERMA *(Off stage.)* It's so faint I can hardly read it. Ohh!

MAC *(Breathlessly.)* What does it say?

ERMA. Just this! *Look in crystal.*

MAC. Is that all?

ERMA. I wonder what that means? *(She appears in the open . . .* THE MYSTERY WOMAN *shrinks back up Right out of* ERMA'S *sight.)*

MAC. It sounds like a lot of gibberish to *me.*

ERMA *(Suddenly . . . She is standing in the opening, looking out.)* I've got it, Mac! That crystal globe there! I've *wondered* why that thing has attracted me so. I've always thought that the glass seemed to glow with a light of its own. Why, it must have been the jewels themselves flashing through the glass!

MAC. By George! That's it!

ERMA. What a hiding place! Under the crystal globe, in plain sight for anyone to see who would! Oh, Mac, let's go and . . . *(The panel swings shut suddenly . . . She*

screams.) Mac! Oh, Help! *MAC, I . . . (Her voice dies away in a gurgle.)*

MAC. My God, it's closed! *(He tries frantically to open the panel.)* Erma, speak to me!

MAC *(Desperately trying to break in the panel.)* I'll break it down, I'll . . . *Erma!*

WOMAN *(Putting a hand on his arm.)* No, don't!

MAC. Let me alone! She's in there alone with . . . !

WOMAN. He won't harm her. All he wants is the necklace.

MAC. But we can't leave her in there without trying to rescue her.

WOMAN *(Whispering to him.)* By the time you break the panel down he will be gone. Your only chance of catching him is to lay a trap.

MAC. How?

WOMAN. He has found out where the collar is hidden. He'll wait until this room is empty. Then he'll try to get the crystal.

MAC. We can soon fix that. *(Starts across to the Right.)*

WOMAN *(Follows him down.)* No, don't take it away. Your only chance of saving her and catching him is to lay in waiting. *(She goes to the bookcase, swings it back.)* In here. Give him a chance to come out.

MAC *(Looking at the fireplace.)* But what's happening to *her?*

WOMAN. He probably has gagged and bound her until he makes his escape. Hurry or you'll *never* catch him.

MAC. If this is a trick . . .

WOMAN *(Significantly.)* You have your gun, haven't you?

MAC. Okay. Come on. *(They exit through the bookcase and it closes after them. There is a slight pause, then the panel of the fireplace opens . . .* ERMA *stands in the opening with her back to the audience . . .* YAMI *is confronting her.)*

YAMI *(Quietly commanding.)* Quickly, Mem Sahib. Quickly. *(*ERMA *starts to back into the room and slowly backs down to the crystal during the balance of* YAMI'S

speech . . . Time this very slowly as he follows her.) Have no fear. You are safe with Yami, who before you awaken, will be on his way back to his people with the necklace which is rightfully *their* property.

ERMA *(Her face drawn, trying to break the hypnotic spell.)* Your eyes . . . no, no, I won't! *(Pauses down Center.)*

YAMI *(Making a few passes in the air before her face.)* Your will is *mine,* Mem Sahib. *Mine! I am high priest of the Tiger Cult!* You . . . will . . . *obey!*

ERMA. Yes . . . yes . . . the crystal . . . *(Starts backing down Right again.)*

YAMI *(Following her slowly.) This* time you will *remember,* Mem Sahib. Remember that Yami, on pain of *death,* cannot return to his *tribe* without the necklace. . . . The necklace that I have searched for and could not find. *(They pause down near the crystal.)* Yami has grown to *love* you, Mem Sahib, and would not have you believe that the blood of your aunt is on his hands. How she died, I do not *know.* She was a thief, and *more.* She *deserved* to die.

ERMA *(Parrot-like, repeating it.)* She . . . deserved . . . to . . . *die.*

YAMI. I take what is rightfully *mine. (*THOMPSON *appears at the windows . . . Takes in the situation and quietly enters, sneaking down behind* YAMI.*)* The *jewels,* Mem Sahib. *Remove* them from their *hiding* place. *Quickly,* before the others *return.*

ERMA *(Barely breathing it, turns slowly, hands outstretched, towards the crystal.)* Yes, the . . . *jewels!*

THOMPSON *(Leveling his revolver on* YAMI.*)* Put 'em up! *(*YAMI *whirls.)* Reach for the *ceiling* . . . quick! *(*YAMI *makes a lightning-like pass at him . . .* THOMPSON *quickly strikes him over the head with the gun . . . He falls Center and groans.)* Oh, you *would,* would you?

ERMA *(Gives a violent start, backs down Right and screams.)* Arthur! Mac!

THOMPSON *(Flourishing his revolver.)* Be quiet, you! *(Crosses to the crystal . . .* ERMA *crouches down Right.)* In the *crystal,* eh? Well, we'll just *see. (Makes a move to*

touch the crystal. THE TIGER *steps into the opening of the fireplace, crouched low, with a black mask over his face and wearing a soft felt hat.)*

TIGER *(Speaks in a hoarse whisper.) Get away from there!*

THOMPSON *(Whirls . . .* ERMA *gives vent to a stifled gasp.)* Oh, it's *you!*

TIGER *(Coming slowly down Center looking at* YAMI.*)* Knocked him *out,* eh?

THOMPSON. Yeah, he made a *pass* at me.

TIGER. So, *he* was the one who almost interfered with our plans? *(*ERMA *is cautiously working her way up Right . . . He suddenly sees her and points, speaking to* THOMPSON.*) Watch* her!

THOMPSON *(Whirls and points the gun.* ERMA *stops.)* Steady there, lady! Don't *move.*

TIGER. What were you doing at that crystal? *(Crosses to* THOMPSON, *in a threatening attitude.)* Double crossing me, eh? *(Continues to speak in the hoarse whisper.)*

THOMPSON. No, I'm not. Honest.

TIGER. Then how did you know about the crystal?

THOMPSON. I was standin' outside the windows an' heard what she said.

TIGER. Where'd that detective go?

THOMPSON. I don't know. I was trailin' Kathryn and . . .

TIGER *(Sharply.)* She got away?

THOMPSON *(Almost whining.)* Aw, it wasn't *my* fault. I saw her come in here an' talk to the dick.

TIGER *(Gives a start.)* She must have told him everything! *(*ERMA *moves and he speaks sharply.)* Stay where you are, if you know what's *good* for you, Miss!

THOMPSON *(Nervously.)* You better hurry up. That dick may come back with the cops.

TIGER *(As* THOMPSON *crosses to the Right of* ERMA'S *chair.)* We'll be a long way from here by that time. *(Wrenches at the crystal.)* It's stuck.

ERMA *(Rushes down on the Right of the pedestal, grabbing at his hands.)* No, no! You *can't!*

TIGER *(To* THOMPSON.*)* Hold her. *(*THOMPSON *goes Right and pins* ERMA'S *arms behind her.)*

ERMA *(Hysterically.)* They're not *yours!* You *shan't! (She is struggling frantically.)*

THOMPSON. Shut *up!*

TIGER. I've got it! *(The globe comes away in his hands and the necklace falls to the floor . . . He quickly stoops to recover them, stands upright holding them in the air.) Look* at them!

THOMPSON. Gee, it's worth fifty thousand at least!

TIGER. *A king's ransom! (Holding them up.)*

ERMA. You shan't have it. *Help! Mac! (As she screams* THOMPSON *quickly claps a hand across her mouth.)*

TIGER. We'll have to take her with us. Come on! *(He starts for the windows.* MACINTOSH *enters through the bookcase with drawn revolver.)*

MAC. Put 'em *up! (*TIGER *whirls, facing* MACINTOSH. MACINTOSH *turns to* THOMPSON.*)* You too, buddy.

ERMA. *Mac! (She rushes to his side.* THOMPSON *and the* TIGER *stand with hands in the air.)*

MAC. I'll trouble you for that necklace. *(Goes up to the* TIGER *and takes it from his hand.)*

THOMPSON *(Now cringing.)* It wasn't *my* fault, mister. *He* planned it all. *(Nods to the* TIGER.*)* He knew all about the secret panels and how the old lady used to work her spook scares.

TIGER. Squealer! *(Makes a start for* THOMPSON, *who crouches back down Left.)*

MAC. Stay right where you are, buddy! *(To* ERMA.*)* All right, Erma?

ERMA. Yes, but—but who *is* he?

WOMAN *(Who has followed* MACINTOSH *into the room.)* He is the man I tried to warn you about, Miss Lowrie.

MAC *(To* ERMA.*)* The whole tiger scare was all thought out to make you leave the house, Erma. Our friend, the animal trainer there, is this man's partner. *(Goes closer to the* TIGER.*)* You've got your necklace, Erma, and *I've* got the *Tiger.* Now all we have to do is find out just who the

A REPRODUCTION OF THE AUNT SYLVIA PICTURE
WE RENT

tiger really *is* . . . *(Quickly tears away the black mask from the* TIGER'S *face . . . He is revealed as* ARTHUR.*)*

ERMA *(Gasps.) Arthur!*

ARTHUR *(Bows slightly, with an ironical smile.)* Yes, Erma, your cousin himself!

ERMA. Oh, Arthur!

ARTHUR *(Shrugs his shoulders.)* Sorry, Erma, but I needed the money. I didn't want to harm *you*, but as for you . . . *(Turns to the* WOMAN.*)* Oh, why didn't you drown in that boat? I've hated you ever since we were married. And now I can thank you for *this*. It's all up, Thompson, we're caught. It was fun while it lasted, to go on living here, scaring you all to death without any of you being any the wiser. The prize was worth the effort, but—but you win, Erma, and—and I . . .

MAC. And *you're* going up the river for a nice long stretch.

WOMAN *(To* ERMA.*)* You see, he fell in love with you after he married *me*. He's always wanted me out of the way, he . . . *(Abruptly starts to weep.)*

ERMA *(Comforting her.)* You poor dear, you may stay here with me. *(To* ARTHUR.*)* Oh, Arthur, why did you do it? If you needed money, why didn't you *tell* me?

ARTHUR. Oh, it wasn't only the money. It was the jewels themselves, not even their value. Just jewels, precious stones, turn me into a beast. I killed Aunt Sylvia in a fit of rage when she refused to let me see the collar. She knew I was jewel mad . . . I'd sell my very soul to possess that collar. I—I—Oh, what's the use? *(He breaks down and starts to sob.* YAMI *groans and moves slightly.)*

ERMA. Yami! He's coming to!

MAC. What's *he* got to do with them?

ERMA. He is the High Priest of the *Tiger* Cult. They sent him here to get the *necklace*. He was in the secret room. He *hypnotized* me. . . . then *Thompson* came in and . . .

MAC *(To* YAMI, *helping him to his feet.)* Come on, get up. You'll go along with the *others*.

ERMA. No, Mac. *(*MACINTOSH *turns to her questioningly.)* Let him go.

MAC. Let him *go?*

ERMA *(Nods.)* Yes. Let him go with . . . *this. (Holds out the necklace to* YAMI.*)*

YAMI *(Breathlessly.) Mem Sahib!*

ERMA *(Smiles.)* They *belong* to you, Yami. *You* and your *tribe.*

YAMI *(Softly.)* Mem Sahib, my tribe will never *see* Yami *again.* Here . . . *(Holds out the necklace.)* I *give* it to you!

ERMA *(Gasps.)* You . . . give it . . . to me?

YAMI *(Smiles.)* For a *wedding* present.

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*) Mac! (He smiles and embraces her . . .* YAMI *goes Left.)*

YAMI *(Turning at the doors Left.)* Yami has learned of *new* ways and . . . and a new *God* from *you,* Mem Sahib. The Tiger Cult is a religion of *blood* and *savagery.* I have tried to be true to my trust but . . . the fruits of victory have caused me to loath it all. *(Slowly.)* I will never go back to my people. *(Bows and exits down Left.)*

ERMA *(To* MACINTOSH.*)* Mac, the jewels are *mine!*

MAC *(Turning to* ERMA.*)* Well, Erma, this clears up your mystery, I guess.

SOPHIA *(Off Left.)* Whoopie! Erma, Erma, I'm so happy. *(Enters Left. She has on a highly colored kimono and her hair is done up in curl papers.)*

ERMA. Auntie, what is it?

SOPHIA. I've found my teeth! I've found my . . . *(Stumbles on the rug, claps her hand to her mouth and wails.)* Oh, there they go! They're gone *again!*

QUICK CURTAIN

SUGGESTIONS FOR SIMPLIFYING THE SETTINGS

If it is impossible or inconvenient to have a box setting, drapes, cyclorama, or curtains may be used to good advantage. The fireplace can be easily constructed. A panel on one side of the fireplace can be made to swing back . . . on the order of a hinged door. Or, an ordinary stage fireplace may be used, placed in front of a single door, and when necessary, pushed in a swinging manner from backstage, when the claws appear and MacIntosh is dragged off stage.

The book case can be made easily. A door-frame may be used. A panel made of compo-board and painted to represent book shelves hinged to the top and made to swing out toward the stage is very effective and takes but little time to construct and at practically no expense. Or, real shelves may be constructed, attached to one side of the door frame, with real books in it. Or, the book case may be omitted entirely and a small secret door be arranged in the flat of the scenery where the claws can appear to reach out for Erma and the Mystery Woman.

For the last act, the same fireplace may be used, turned with the rear side towards the audience. This arrangement may also be followed with the painting of Aunt Sylvia . . . the reverse side is visible to the audience. The panel which covers the painting in the third act . . . as indicated in the book . . . is really of no consequence and may be eliminated entirely.

If a box setting is to be used, but in which no openings can be cut, the fireplace may be painted around a door opening with a mantel shelf added . . . nailed on about five and a half feet from the floor. The door already in the piece serves as the secret entrance. The upper part of the door is covered with Aunt Sylvia's picture. (See illustration.) "Fireplace" paper which gives the suggestion of bricks may be used also instead of painting the door and

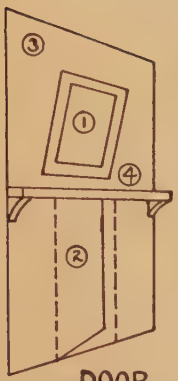
it could be placed over the entire portion of the flat piece below the mantel. A single doorway is used for the book case. The upper panel may be covered by an attached book rack and the entire door may open when the Tiger's claws appear. No special scenery is required for the last act. The first-act setting may be reversed. This arrangement will be satisfactory since the lights in this act are dim and the setting itself should be in dark shadows.

The panel below the book case, thru which the Mystery Woman disappears, can be eliminated. The lights may be kept out until she has made her exit thru the French windows, or off Right below the first entrance.

If these suggestions are followed, no one need hesitate to produce this play. The main center of attraction is always upon the situations, the dialogue and the characters, and not upon the stage setting.

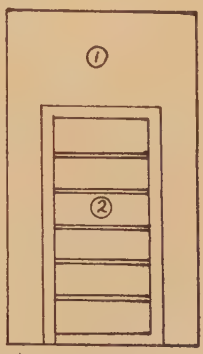
We shall be glad to aid directors in solving any problem which may arise in producing this play. A letter of inquiry will bring a prompt reply.

Suggestion for Box Setting



FIREPLACE

① PAINTING ABOVE MANTLE
② DOOR OPENING (SECRET PANEL)
SUGGESTION OF BRICK
③ FLAT PIECE WITH DOOR
④ MANTLE SHELF NAILED ON FLAT PIECE
DOTTED LINES INDICATE DOOR OPENING



BOOKCASE

① FLAT PIECE WITH DOOR ② UPPER PANEL OF DOOR PAINTED LIKE SHELVES OR WITH BOOK RACK ATTACHED TO SINGLE DOOR

Suggestion for Cyclorama Setting

Ⓐ BOOK CASE DOOR
Ⓑ FRENCH WINDOWS
Ⓒ PAINTING
Ⓓ FIREPLACE OPENING
Ⓔ DOUBLE DOORS

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRODUCING THE STAGE EFFECTS

RAIN—The rain effect may be produced by rolling a lot of B. B. shots about on the head of a trap drum. Or, a tin tray may be used. It is tilted from side to side to get the effect.

LIGHTNING—The lightning effect may be secured by striking a piece of carbon against an electrically heated red hot wire. Or, flashlight powder may be used. Or, it can be produced by a large, blueish-white bulb turned off and on quickly behind the French windows.

WIND—Small, inexpensive wind whistles can be purchased from a toy department, or a ten-cent store. However, if these are not available, two brooms swished against the sides of old pieces of canvas make a very realistic effect. Or, a regular wind machine may be constructed. Details of construction may be found in "Runnin' the Show", price one dollar.

THUNDER—The thunder rolling may be accomplished by pounding a padded stick on a bass drum. Or, a large piece of tin may be hung offstage from the ceiling. When the sheet is shaken gently the effect of a low rumbling of thunder is produced.

WE RENT THE PROPERTIES USED IN "TIGER HOUSE"

We rent the following properties for use in the production of "Tiger House". The quotations include use of the articles for the dress rehearsal the day before the first performance.

Aunt Sylvia's Picture	$3.00
(Size, 36 in. by 29 in.)	
Tiger's Gloves	1.00
Jewel Band	.50
Crystal Box	1.00

(Does not include crystal ball.)

The charge of one-half of the above quotations for each performance after the first one.

* * *

EXPRESS CHARGES ARE TO PAID BY THE CUSTOMER BOTH WAYS

Since there is a great demand for these articles, a reservation should reach us at least two weeks before the dress rehearsal date.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE USE OF THE PROPERTIES

If these suggestions are followed, it will be very simple to use these articles. A flashlight is used behind the picture to produce the light effects in the eyes and the lamp. (The lamp is in the picture.) Place the crystal box on a pedestal of the correct height for Yami. Place an ordinary round white light shade or globe on top of the crystal box to represent the crystal ball. Or, use a round white fish-bowl. Turn the switch on inside the crystal box and keep the light burning throughout the first two acts. The jewel band is placed inside the box. When Arthur gets the box in his hands, he fumbles with it a few seconds, the bottom opens, and the jewel band falls to the floor.

(Reduced Window Card)

We sell window cards to advertise "Tiger House" at these rates:

1. Less than 25 cars—seven cents each.

2. Over 25 cards—six cents each.

3. Whenever a hundred or more cards are purchased, we will print in the local announcement without charge. The dimensions of the card are 12x15 in.

FURNITURE AND PROPERTIES

ACT ONE

Backless couch down Right. (Dark throw and cushions for this, also magazine.)
Pedestal and gazing crystal. (Trick effect explained elsewhere.)
Practical bridge lamp.
What-not. (Bric-a-brac and lace doilies for this.)
Dark arm chair Center.
Small center table Left Center. (Throw and lamp for this, also magazine.)
Straight-backed chairs either side of table. (Also wine bottle and glass.)
Desk up Right and chair. (Lamp on table—practical—also desk set, etc.)
Old-fashioned bric-a-brac for mantelshelf. Also dark throw. Iron dogs.
Trick picture above mantel.
Yellowed letter hidden in frame of picture.
Flashlight behind picture. (For supernatural effects.)
Reference papers for MacIntosh.
Armload of small logs for Murdock.
Hand baggage for Oswald.
Chewing gum for Peggy.
Hand flashlight for Thompson.
Door bell off Left.
Nail and pane of glass up Right for scratching effect.
Tiger gloves back of bookcase Right.
Cane for Arthur.
Tub of water off Left for wetting actors' clothes.
Pan of mud off Left for same.
Handkerchief for Sophia.
Practical window shade on windows up Right.
Dark drapes for windows and arch.
Turban for Yami.
Black kitten back of windows.

Bandana handkerchief and rope for the Mystery Woman.
Light switch down Left on upper side of arch.
Water pitcher and glass on table Left.

ACT TWO

Same furniture.
Pan of water and wash rag for Murdock.
Stone with message tied about it, off up Right.
Effect of breaking glass off up Right.
Green flashlight for Thompson.
Bandana handkerchief for Thompson.
Hand baggage for Peggy.
Tiger gloves back of fireplace panel.
Handkerchief for Erma.
Revolver for MacIntosh and Arthur.

ACT THREE
(Same setting)

Necklace placed under crystal.
Revolver for Thompson.
Mask for Tiger.
Paper imitations of butterflies, a bat, etc., to blow through fireplace when Oswald enters.
Folded throw on chair.
Revolver for MacIntosh.

ACT THREE
(Change of setting)

Soap box.
Stone, string, writing table and pencil on same.
Old mattress under panel Right.
Oil lamp (practical) on soap box.
Wooden chest over Left. (Large enough to hold the Mystery Woman.)
Old sheet over mattress.
Pedestal, globe and necklace off up Center.
Revolvers for Thompson and Arthur.
Coil of rope up stage.

PUBLICITY THROUGH YOUR LOCAL PAPERS

The press is always the most satisfactory medium in giving the proper publicity to your productions. To assist you we have included on the following pages several excerpts from reviews of professional and amateur performances of TIGER HOUSE, as we believe these notices are always interesting to local audiences.

We have added a number of suggested press notes, or "readers," which may be used exactly as suggested or changed about to suit your own ideas when submitted to your local newspapers.

* * *

PRESS MATTER—"TIGER HOUSE"

On————the————Players will present Robert St. Clair's thrilling mystery comedy entitled "TIGER HOUSE," at the ————Theatre

This clever mystery play, which has been played by more than a thousand schools after a long, successful run on the professional stage, is laid around an isolated country estate called "Mystery Manor," because of the alleged hauntings.

Erma Lowrie, a young shop girl, has inherited the estate from her eccentric Aunt, and according to the terms of the will she must occupy the house for the period of one year.

Erma's cousins, Arthur Hale and Oswald Kerins, her living Aunt Sophia and Peggy Van Ess, a former girl friend, are all house guests when things begin to happen! And then—well, you must see the play to learn of the mysterious details. There is a delightful thread of romance, clean and highly-amusing comedy; and, although the mystery element dominates, there are no dead bodies, no shots fired and nothing really gruesome.

* * *

PRESS MATTER—"TIGER HOUSE"

When the————present TIGER HOUSE, the successful mystery comedy drama, at————on———— they will introduce to the local audiences one of the most novel and different plays of its kind that has been written within the last few years.

It is a play of thrills, chills, romance and laughter, and the suspense of not knowing just what is going to happen next will keep you on the edge of your seat during the greater part of the evening.

Mr. Robert St. Clair, the author, has succeeded in giving us a myster play that will baffle even a skilled detective as to the motive behind all the strange and weird happenings, and yet it is all so plausible that many who witness the performance will, upon returning to their homes, start at unexpected sounds or perhaps even look under the bed!

No one is killed in order to get a thrill across, but near killings are so frequent that one shudders every few minutes! There are no shots fired, but one expects them to be! There is nothing gruesome in action or plot, but you are just SURE that you are GOING to see a ghost or something supernatural!

All of which means that you are guaranteed one of the most exciting, enjoyable and laughable evenings you have ever experienced when you see "TIGER HOUSE!"

* * *

PRESS MATTER—"TIGER HOUSE"

Creepy noises, eerie lights, women's screams and clutching claws that snatch unsuspecting characters off the stage right before your very eyes, are only a FEW of the thrills you will experience when you see that famous mystery comedy play, TIGER HOUSE, to be presented ———— by ———— at ————.

But don't be afraid! Of course, you will be excited. You might even scream! But just when you expect the worst you will start laughing at some of the rib-tickling comedy which always comes along just at the right moment. It is this variety which makes the play so amusing. Thirlls one moment, comedy the next, romance the next. And it all leads to an unexpected conclusion that will leave you gasping and maybe a bit chagrined to find that after all you have guessed wrongly as to the guilty party!

Much time, work and careful planning have all resulted in what is hoped to be one of the most ambitious productions the———— have ever attempted. Many mechanical and electrical effects had to be worked out. The play itself needed careful rehearsing as the action is rapid, characterizations all vastly different and well written. We can positively guarantee that all those who see "TIGER HOUSE" will feel better for an evening well spent amidst thrills, chills, shudders, laughter and—love!

PRESS MATTER—"TIGER HOUSE"

If you were a poor young girl and suddenly found myself in possession of a lovely country estate, but by the terms of the will you were obliged to live on it constantly for a period of one year, you wouldn't hesitate to do so, would you? But on the other hand, if you were told that the house was haunted by your deceased aunt and that a phantom tiger appeared at midnight in order to regain possession of a mysterious collar of jewels which had been stolen from its neck years before, what would you do then?

That is the situation which confronts ERMA LOWRIE, heroine of the great mystery thriller, "TIGER HOUSE," the————play to be presented on ———— by ———— at ————

Just what is behind all the strange and weird happenings and how Erma manages to retain possession of her inheritance go to make as exciting an evening in the theatre as one has ever experienced. The plot is well founded, the situations are breath-taking and there is a delightful thread of romance for those who enjoy the love element.

"TIGER HOUSE" has been played professionally all over the country and everywhere it has been a tremendous success. It is with the assured guarantee of the play's background that the———— have selected it for their————play.

* * *

WHAT OTHERS HAVE TO SAY

TIGER HOUSE was first presented by the Berkell Players at Indianapolis, Ind., in 1927, when it scored a tremendous applause from critics and managers. Since then it has been produced by stock companies throughout the United States and is now available for amateur organizations also. The following comments indicate the reception which TIGER HOUSE has received everywhere:

"Thrilled almost to hysteria, the full house that greeted the initial presentation of 'TIGER HOUSE' by the National Players at the Cox Theatre yesterday voted the play the finest diversion of the kind seen here in at least two seasons. There is no artificial cramming of theatrical traps. And although things fall down and go boom and ladies just vanish in thin air, it all travels toward a climax which is revealed with dramatic suddenness, completely fooling any detective that may have strayed into the theatre."

—"Commercial," Cincinnati, Ohio.

* * *

"It is sufficient to say that the plot is sound and the situations are weird enough to cause at least an occasional shudder to wrinkle the most blase spine. One device is novel; we have not encountered it before. The last act opens fifteen minutes before the second act closes. Mr. St. Clair has succeeded in building the suspense to a high pitch."

—Vilas J. Boyle in Indianapolis Star.

* * *

"It is the odd construction which gives this play its chief charm . . . St. Clair has a gem in Peggy. . . . St. Clair with his cruel Tiger theme, the lighted lamp in the painting, and the rain effects, has enough business for several shows. . . . It reveals a new method in playwriting."

—Walter Hickman in Indianapolis Times.

"THE THRILLER OF THRILLERS"

"The performance of TIGER HOUSE was a decided success . . . literally a howling one . . . and we wish to thank you for your attention and assistance."

—High School, Dysart, Iowa.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was a huge success. One of our ministers expressed his appreciation of the play because of its wholesomeness. I cannot speak highly enough of this play as the best for high schools."

—Mary Killerain, Dramatic Director, Le Sueur, Minn.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was well received and the box office receipts one of the best in spite of the fact that the price of admission was lowered."

—Mary Shively, High School, Dumright, Okla.

* * *

"The production of TIGER HOUSE was successful. The audience was well pleased and many said it was the best high school play they had ever seen."

—Dramatic Coach, High School, Pelican Rapids, Minn.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was a great success."

—Supt. E. E. Waters, Barron, Wis.

* * *

"Our audiences were enthusiastic over TIGER HOUSE. It appealed strongly to our young people."

—Minnie W. Jones, High School, De Kalb, Ill.

* * *

"Because of the recent success and approval received through the play TIGER HOUSE, I am returning to you for possible suggestions for a Senior play."

—Elizabeth Bescherer, High School, Porter, Ind.

* * *

"We gave TIGER HOUSE last week to an enthusiastic audience. They commented especially on the fact that the plot was different from the usual run of high school plays."

—Mary A. McDonough, High School, Casselton, N. D.

THE IDEAL HIGH SCHOOL PLAY!

"Creepy noises, eerie lights and clutching claws that snatched unsuspecting characters off the stage, kept the audience of nearly 2,000 people in a fever of excitement Thursday night as the graduating class of Roosevelt High School presented TIGER HOUSE. The audience was wrought up to such a pitch of nervousness that dramatic moments were greeted by screams, and acting several times had to be suspended to wait for the audience to become quiet enough for the lines to be heard.

Minneapolis Journal, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

* * *

"Approximately 700 persons witnessed the production of TIGER HOUSE. It has been acclaimed the best production ever staged at the the Methodist institution."

—Iowa Wesleyan College paper, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was a great success."

—Dramatic Coach, Abraham Lincoln High School, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

* * *

"I wish to say this about TIGER HOUSE: It surely 'got' the crowd as no other play could do. It has been reported the best play Windom ever put on."

—Estelle Anderson, High School, Windom, Minn.

* * *

"The production of TIGER HOUSE here was an immense success. Nothing but highly favorable comments reach us . . . 'Worse than Frankenstein' . . . 'The very best ever presented in this town' . . . 'Words fail to express it,' etc."

—Dramatic Coach, High School, Elmira, Ontario, Canada.

* * *

"We produced your play TIGER HOUSE last year and were so pleased with it that we should like to examine some more of your plays."

—Mrs. Preston Waltz, High School, Cairo, Ohio.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was an artistic success . . . one I enjoyed coaching above all other plays in my experience."

—Alice S. Nuffer, High School, Bagley, Minn.

"THE HIT OF HITS!"

"Help me select a play half as successful as TIGER HOUSE was here, and I shall be satisfied!"
—Evangeline Westline, High School, Faribault, Minn.

* * *

"We consider TIGER HOUSE one of the most successful plays ever given here at our school."
—Glenn I. Prickett, Agricultural College, Morris, Minn.

* * *

"The play went over very nicely both nights, and if the response of our audience can be taken as an indication they surely enjoyed it. All comments have been favorable."
—Emma B. Overvaag, High School, Northfield, Minn.

* * *

"We were greatly pleased with TIGER HOUSE. It is different from the ordinary school play and went over 'big' with the audience."
—Supt. F. O. Flenniken, New Prague, Minn.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was extremely successful . . . literally a howling success."
—Katherine McKenzie, High School, Wheatland, Wyo.

* * *

"We staged TIGER HOUSE last night, and have received more compliments on it than any play I have ever used. It has been acclaimed the best play that has ever been staged here."
—A. N. Pomeroy, High School, Dighton, Kans.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE, thrilling mystery play by the graduating class of the high school, will be repeated tonight. This is the first time a senior play has had to be given for the third time, Principal Bracewell said last night. Public demand made the repetition necessary."
—Press Comment, Burlington, Iowa.

* * *

"We are very glad that we chose TIGER HOUSE as it was one of the most successful plays ever given here."
—Florence H. Henry, High School, Lansing, Iowa.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE is a great mystery play."
—Supt. Will A. Pye, Toledo, Iowa.

YOUR NEXT PLAY, "TIGER HOUSE"

"The play TIGER HOUSE was a big success. It is one of the finest mystery plays I have ever read or directed."

—Henrietta Bock, High School, Ellinwood, Kansas.

* * *

"We feel that TIGER HOUSE was one of the best plays ever put on here, and not especially hard to put across, and very easy in the matter of costumes, stage settings, and lighting."

—Supt. A. W. Munson, Taylors Falls, Minn.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was a fine play and a great success."

—Supt. G. E. Green, Kiron, Iowa.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was the talk of the town for a week. I have heard time and again that it was the best high school play ever put on here."

—Wilma Wigham, High School, Tomahawk, Wis.

* * *

"I am pleased to recommend TIGER HOUSE without any qualifications whatsoever. Many people declared it was the best play we had ever given. The character parts can be taken by juniors or seniors in any high school."

—Supt. J. S. Hilliard, Estherville, Iowa.

* * *

"The audience was very well pleased with the performance of TIGER HOUSE, and certainly received enough thrills for their money."

—Supt. Geo. G. Kottke, Windom, Minn.

* * *

"Shrieks of terror at the weird happenings of TIGER HOUSE coupled with hearty laughter at ensuing humorous situations came from the high school auditorium last night.'

—Press Comment, Muscatine, Iowa.

"SHERLOCK HOLMES OUTDONE"

"We have had one very successful performance of TIGER HOUSE and are looking forward to another this evening."
—Dorothy V. Diles, High School, McArthur, Ohio.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was one of the best plays ever given here."
—Curtis E. Ambrose, Township High School, Oblong, Ill.

* * *

"It may be of interest to you to know that TIGER HOUSE was very well received. Many who came wanted the play repeated so they could be thrilled again. The cast had a lot of enjoyment preparing it."
—Supt. L. A. Christianson, Bowbells, N. D.

* * *

"We presented TIGER HOUSE last night to a very appreciative audience. As a result the common comment is: 'It is the best high school play ever presented here.'"
—J. Lucille Carlson, High School, North Bend, Ore.

* * *

"We presented TIGER HOUSE last night and am herewith sending you the royalty fee. TIGER HOUSE is a play of a hundred, never to be forgotten . . . full of thrills, chills, suspense, breathtaking happenings and startling revelations. It is the best play ever produced here. I considered it the most interesting to 'work up' of the twenty-eight long plays I have produced."
—Mrs. Mabel Ellefson, Dramatic Coach, Popejoy, Iowa.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was the most successful of any Senior play ever presented here and I can recommend it highly for high school use."
—Paul R. McCulloch, High School, Wasco, Oregon.

"A GUARANTEED SUCCESS"!

"TIGER HOUSE was excellent and pronounced about the best play this school has presented."

—Supt. V. D. Halvorson, Adams, Minn.

* * *

"TIGER HOUSE was a decided success and our public claimed it was the finest production ever staged by amateurs. As for the play cast and myself we cannot say enough for it. We found it fascinating and clever in every respect and thoroughly enjoyed working with it." —Violette I. Donlan, High School, Pender, Nebr.

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"I believe that you can tell by the fact that we found it necessary to give a repeat performance of TIGER HOUSE, what a distinct success it was here. It seemed to be the general opinion that it was the best senior play ever presented in this school. I do not hesitate to say that the success of this production lay in the play itself. The action and atmosphere which surround it, even from the first rehearsals, removed for me all trouble with self-consciousness and stage fright. The cast was enthusiastic about it. I certainly wish to thank you for advising me to use TIGER HOUSE."

—Muriel C. Harrington, High School, Pipestone, Minn.

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"TIGER HOUSE was very successful here."

—Clara B. Ballard, High School, Remer, Minn.

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"The audience truly enjoyed TIGER HOUSE. Remarks which came to me after the play were that the audience felt that this was as good a play as had ever been given in the high school, if not better. We are certainly glad that we chose TIGER HOUSE. We also wish to thank you for your interest and help."

—Eldon Penner, Dramatic Coach, Cedar Vale, Kansas.

Tiger House is A "Sure-Fire" Hit!

"TIGER HOUSE went over in good shape. Many said it was the best play ever given here."

—Supt. J. Wilbur Hadley, Barclay, Kan.

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"Our two performances of TIGER HOUSE have been declared a big success. We enjoyed the play immensely."

—Mrs. Margaret D. Olson, High School, Laurens, Iowa.

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"TIGER HOUSE was extremely successful here. From many people came the remark, 'I forgot they were amateurs on the stage.' The crowd was at a high pitch of excitement throughout the performance. Some people even forgot themselves so far as to scream out warnings to Erma and the Mystery Woman."

—Miss Annabel Carver, High School, Ellendale, Minn.

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"We were very pleased with TIGER HOUSE and thank you so much for suggesting it to our class. Many have said it was the best play ever given here."

—Senior Class, High School, Alliance, Nebr.

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"TIGER HOUSE was very successfully produced here, the audience on both nights declaring it one of the best high school plays. For my part, I am recommending it to my friends, which is the highest praise I give anything. I wish to thank you for the promptness with which all my orders were filled."

—Kenneth C. Coulter, High School, Logan, Ohio.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success. Some say that it was the best play they ever had here."

—Ruth Woessner, High School, Thomson, Ill.

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"We had great success in presenting TIGER HOUSE. Everybody said it was the best play we had ever given, both as to the nature of the play and the acting."

—Sister M. Remigia, Girls' Cath. High School, Hays, Kans.

"OUR MOST POPULAR SUCCESS"

"TIGER HOUSE was a success and everyone who saw it was very much pleased. We all enjoyed working with it. Several people have already reported that it was the best production ever given in this community."

—High School, Hartland, Mich.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a success and the audience liked it."

—Emma C. Dumke, Junior College, Hibbing, Minn.

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"Thrills and laughter reigned supreme last night when the sophomore class of the Junior College presented TIGER HOUSE, one of the best school productions in years."

—Hibbing Daily Tribune, Hibbing, Minn.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a marked success."

—Paul V. Bissell, High School, Green City, Mo.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a huge success. Many people said it was the best high school play they had ever seen."

—Hilma Richardson, High School, Clarence, Iowa.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success in every way. Many people are asking that we play it a second time."

—Supt. C. H. Orrison, Waubun, Minn.

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"TIGER HOUSE is a good play and proved very popular here. I particularly appreciate the interest you take and the service you give all the way from purchase of books to the actual production.

—John H. Hill, High School, Marengo, Iowa.

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"TIGER HOUSE was one of our best satisfying 'thrillers' we ever put on. All 'ages' reveled in it."

—Viola Goetsch, High School, Winona, Minn.

"An Ideal Play for Amateurs"

"I can tell the world that the play is a decided hit. If schools are interested in securing a play that will please about everybody, have them try TIGER HOUSE."
—Prof. Geo. McCarthy, Dept. of Speech, State College, Brookings, South Dakota.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a big success here. Played to two thrilled crowds. It looks now as if we will have to give one or two encore performances. Our public says that TIGER HOUSE was the finest Senior play ever produced here."
—T. Fetterer, Dramatic Director, High School, Hobart, Ind.

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"The play is progressing nicely. There is much excitement all over the school. It is certainly a play that lends itself nicely to high schools. TIGER HOUSE is the always searched for 'something different.'"
—Dramatic Coach, High School, Eau Claire, Wis.

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"We gave a very successful performance of TIGER HOUSE. The audience and the actors enjoyed the play immensely and we heartily recommend it for high school production."
—Velma Linford, High School, Afton, Wyo.

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"We have a very well equipped stage which helped to make TIGER HOUSE the best play we have presented. Among young and old, it is the 'talk of the town'. We have had many requests to repeat it."
—Helen Pesark, East High School, Superior, Wis.

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"TIGER HOUSE was the biggest success we have ever had."
—High School, Hankinson, N. D.

"TIGER HOUSE PLEASES AUDIENCES"

"Thank you so much for suggesting TIGER HOUSE to me for the Senior Class play. It was a huge success judging from all the comments we have received from the students and school patrons. Personally, I liked the play because all the parts had character to work on, the story was gripping, fascinating to the audience."

—Hazel McCarthy, High School, Wells, Minn.

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"Not in a long time have audiences enjoyed anything so much as did the two audiences who saw TIGER HOUSE staged by the junior class. It was one of the most vivid and gripping plays ever given here."

—Press Comment, Alexandria, Minn.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success here. The house was packed and everyone was very much pleased with it."

—Celia I. Clary, Stephens High School, Rumford, Me.

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"TIGER HOUSE was well liked. In fact, we never presented a play that held the audience as well. It is splendid for high school pupils because it gets away from the usual triangle love affair."

—Mrs. Laura G. Childs, High School, Bloomington, Ind.

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"TIGER HOUSE was acclaimed by many the best class play ever presented in the Millbank high school."

—Press Comment, Millbank, S. D.

"OUR BEST SELLER"

"I must say that I enjoyed the directing of TIGER HOUSE to the utmost. I feel personally that the play was a success and, from all reports, our audience liked it very much. I heartily recommend this play to smaller schools with ambitious inclinations."

—Maria L. Myrah, High School, Eden Valley, Minn.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a wonderful success. We enjoyed working on it all the time, as the cast put it, 'we liked it up to the very night of the performance and then it seemed new.' I'm sure if you could have heard the audience, you would know what a success it was."

—Beatrice Young, High School, Rhinelander, Wis.

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"We gave a successful performance of TIGER HOUSE. The audience was very well pleased and the box office receipts one of the best in spite of a lowered admission charge. I am pleased to recommend it as an excellent high school play. It is different, wholesome and certainly entertaining. Thank you for prompt, efficient service and help. I am glad I discovered your company. I will need at least two more full-length plays and several short ones and I shall look to you first."

—Florence Redman, High School, Glenns Ferry, Ida.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success. Everyone was well pleased with the production. Remarks such as 'Great,' Best Ever,' etc., were heard quite frequently.

—Herbert J. Reinhardt, High School, Hastings, Mich.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success. It was considered by many the best play ever presented here."

—Supt. R. Oeduin, Bison, S. D.

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"I was one of the happiest high school dramatic coaches in the country after the production of TIGER HOUSE. The school officials decided that, in view of the decided success of the production, to allow us to repeat the play."

—Mary M. Moyer, Wernersville, Penn.

Tiger House--"An Unusual Play"

"TIGER HOUSE was a huge success."
—Leslie J. Dodd, High School, Perham, Minn.

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"We think the play, TIGER HOUSE, splendid and are enthusiastic about your method of co-operating with smaller schools in the matter of royalties."
—G. M. Coleman, Amity, Mo.

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"TIGER HOUSE is one of the best amateur plays that I have ever attempted to produce. The cleverness of individual character development is most effective. And because of its attractive advertising features, it is easy to fill the house with TIGER HOUSE."
—Howard Gabriel, Director of Dramatics, Burlington, N. C.

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"I have never written to tell you that your play, TIGER HOUSE, is everything you advertised it to be."
—Anne M. Jones, Nekoosa, Wis.

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"TIGER HOUSE is an unusual play. It is considered the best play that has ever been staged here. The screams that came from the audience drowned out the screams of the mystery woman. Oswald and Peg furnished plenty of laughter. I am happy to have found your play."
—Mrs. T. G. Carner, High School, Garrison, N. D.

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"The production of TIGER HOUSE was very enthusiastically received by the audience."
—Supt. R. T. Magleby, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a wonderful success. The class certainly enjoyed putting it on and the crowd enjoyed it very much. Remarks come to me that it was the best play ever put on here. I can certainly say that it went over in a big way."
—Melvin A. Buzzard, High School, Sedgwick, Kansas.

"The Mystery of Mysteries"

"TIGER HOUSE was so entirely satisfactory to us in every way, and so much fun to produce, that I cannot praise it too highly. As one member of my cast remarked, 'This play grows more interesting and exciting with each rehearsal,' and that, I am sure, was the opinion of all who worked on the play. The performance itself was highly successful. Screams of terror and shouts of hearty laughter as well as delighted chuckles, proved that TIGER HOUSE was real entertainment. We have had a great deal of praise for our production."

—Dorothy Andrews, High School, Middletown, Conn.

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"TIGER HOUSE was presented before one of the largest audiences in the history of our school. Everyone commented on how much they enjoyed the play. TIGER HOUSE was the most successful Senior play to be presented in Robert E. Lee High School."

—Mrs. J. W. Ramsdell, Director of Dramatics, Lee High School, Jacksonville, Fla.

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"I want to tell you what a splendid success your play, TIGER HOUSE, proved to be. The audience responded exceptionally well, and afterward many said it was the best play ever given in West Union. Two of my friends are considering the play for next year and I have encouraged them to produce it. I wish to thank you for the co-operation which you have given me to make the play a success. I hope that I shall be able to get another play from you next year."

—Dorothy Sparks, High School, West Union, Ia.

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"We presented the play, TIGER HOUSE, on February 1. Let me say that we sent home one of the best pleased crowds that ever met in our Auditorium. It was a pleasure to see the satisfaction that was expressed."

—Supt. John W. Collins, New Baden, Ill.

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"I want to thank you sincerely for the splendid courtesy and service you have given us. We enjoyed presenting TIGER HOUSE and audience was most satisfactorily responsive both during the play and in their comments afterward."

—Ethel Dunn, High School, Waterville, Minn.

"Thrills! Chills! Suspense!"

"Last year we were so well pleased with TIGER HOUSE that I am anxious to try another one of your plays."
—Donald Stiles, Mingo, Iowa.

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"TIGER HOUSE was considered very successful. It held the audience better than any play we have given here in recent years."
—Supt. H. E. Marquette, Cresbard, S. D.

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"We produced TIGER HOUSE last night and the audience enjoyed it immensely. Everyone seemed to get a thrill. We thought the storm effects added so much to the mysterious element."
—Mary W. Scheid, Everest, Kansas.

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"TIGER HOUSE was a great success. The house was filled the second night as a result of the first night's performance. Mr. Albright, head of our mathematics department said: 'It was the best play Batavia High School has ever staged.' Many people said it was the best amateur presentation they ever saw. We are very grateful."
—Pauline Gehring, Dramatic Director, High School, Batavia, N. Y.

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"TIGER HOUSE did prove to be an outstanding production because of the varied character types, the stirring action and the gripping atmosphere it creates. I am glad you recommended it so highly and I shall not hesitate to say that it is by far the best high school play I have ever seen."
—Gunda E. Tackle, High School, Parshall, N. D.

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"Our production of TIGER HOUSE was most successful. It is a splendid play and well worth the effort to produce it. We started with practically nothing in the way of stage and light effects but a little ingenuity resulted in a very effective setting, light and storm background. In ten years as a school and also a professional coach, I have never had more enthusiastic comments on any play."
—Fannie E. Magoffin, High School, Berlin, N. D.

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"The Senior Class play, TIGER HOUSE, was one of the best plays ever attempted by a local high school class."
—Press Comment, Wymore, Nebr.

"READ THIS LETTER"

Estherville Public Schools

-- and --

Junior College

J. S. HILLIARD, SUPT

Estherville, Iowa,

November 20, 1930

e Northwestern Press
00 Portland Ave
nneapolis, Minn.

ear Mr. Brings:

I am pleased to recommend your "Tiger
ouse" without any qualifications whatsoever.
s you know, we gave it here several days ago
nd it met with very popular approval. In fact,
any people declared it was the best play we
ad ever given. The character parts can be
aken by juniors or seniors in any high school
nd it will be a success wherever it is attempte
am sure.

You need not hesitate to use this
etter in any way you wish as I feel I would
e doing other schools a favor by notifying
hem of this splendid mystery play.

With best wishes, I am

Most sincerely yours

SH:LBD

J. S. Hilliard

"THE PHANTOM TIGER"

A Mystery Comedy in Three Acts by Robert St. Clair. One easy interior setting. Six men, six women. The author has written this new play as a sequal to his famous success, "Tiger House," with the same setting and practically the same characters. If you have already staged "Tiger House," your audience will be interested in "The Phantom Tiger." Royalty, twenty-five dollars a performance. Price, 75c a copy.

The action of this play begins where "Tiger House" ends. Erma Lowrie, a young shop girl, suddenly finds herself the heiress to Mystery Manor, a supposedly haunted house, located miles from the nearest village. Her aunt, the former owner, had been a fake spirit medium and had incurred the emnity of the "Tiger Cult" of Africa by stealing a valuable necklace from the throat of their god—a live tiger—while it was lying in a drugged condition.

The superstitions seem to have a basis of fact when Erma and her sweetheart, MacIntosh, a detective, discover her own cousin, Arthur, as the person responsible for the scares. He has been trying to frighten them away in order to search for the necklace. The sheriff is called and the prisoners are locked up in the cellar for the night. They escape but Arthur is confronted by the apparition of Aunt Sylvia, the deceased aunt. He dies of heart failure and shock. Just when they think the mystery is solved, they are startled to find deeper motives behind these events which lead to a surprising novel conclusion.

Th old familiar characters of the author's famous "Tiger House" are found in this even greater play. There is Aunt Sophia, who continually loses her teeth when frightened; Peggy Van Ess, who sets her cap for Oswald, the "Bug Chaser," Erma, the appealing heroine, and her sweetheart-detective; the mysterious house-keeper, Mrs. Murdock; and, two new characters in the persons of Sam Osgood, the sheriff, who "always gets his man," and Rumba, a negro brick mason. All the thrills of "Tiger House" are found in this play with some new ones added and the comedy is even more pronounced.

Here is a play that we predict will be a worthy successor to the famous success, "Tiger House"!

"THE TIGER'S NECKLACE"!

A Mystery Comedy in Three Acts by Robert St. Clair. Seven women, seven men. One easy interior setting with a dark drop curtain for the prologue and epilogue. A 1937 release written in response to a demand from producers of "Tiger House" and "The Phantom Tiger." But the play is so written that it stands alone and will thrill audiences who have never seen the other plays. Royalty, $25 a performance. Price, 75c a copy.

The action of "The Tiger's Necklace" begins in Mystery Manor, a grim old mansion in the Midwestern United States, where Madame Sylvia has suddenly appeared after everyone had thought her dead. It seems that she is a spirit medium who while travelling through Central India, incurred the enmity of the ferocious Hindu Tiger Cult and had to flee back to America for her life. Before she left, however, she stole a marvelous necklace of jewels from about the throat of the sacred tiger. Once in America, Madame Sylvia lived in constand fear of the Cult's vengence. So, to make them believe her dead, she disappeared leaving the estate to Erma Lowrie, her young niece.

Now the Cult have found out that Madame Sylvia is alive and are determined to recover the collar and punish the thief. While the drums of the advancing worshippers are steadily surrounding the house, Madame Sylvia tells what really prompted her to steal the collar and how, in doing it she saved the life and reason of a beautiful English girl.

All the above happens in the prologue. The play itself is a flash-back to India, in the savage hill state of Mau, where the Tiger Cult has its stronghold. Besides the old familiar characters of "Tiger House" we meet several new and intensely interesting people in "The Tiger's Necklace." There is Mahmoud, the Rajah of Mau, whose power over the natives is nothing short of miraculous. Then we see the "Tiger Woman," as strange and compelling a character as was ever written into a mystery play. Besides these there is Major Jackson, his wife and daughter, Ann, who has come under the spell of the Rajah and is about to become high priestess of the Cult when Madame Sylvia intervenes. The action is rapid, the thrills are breath-taking, the comedy is logical, the suspense is well sustained and the dialogue is exceptionally well written. Those who have seen "Tiger House" and "The Phantom Tiger" will be eager to see and know just happened to Madame Sylvia at the time when she was first introduced to the Tiger Cult!

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